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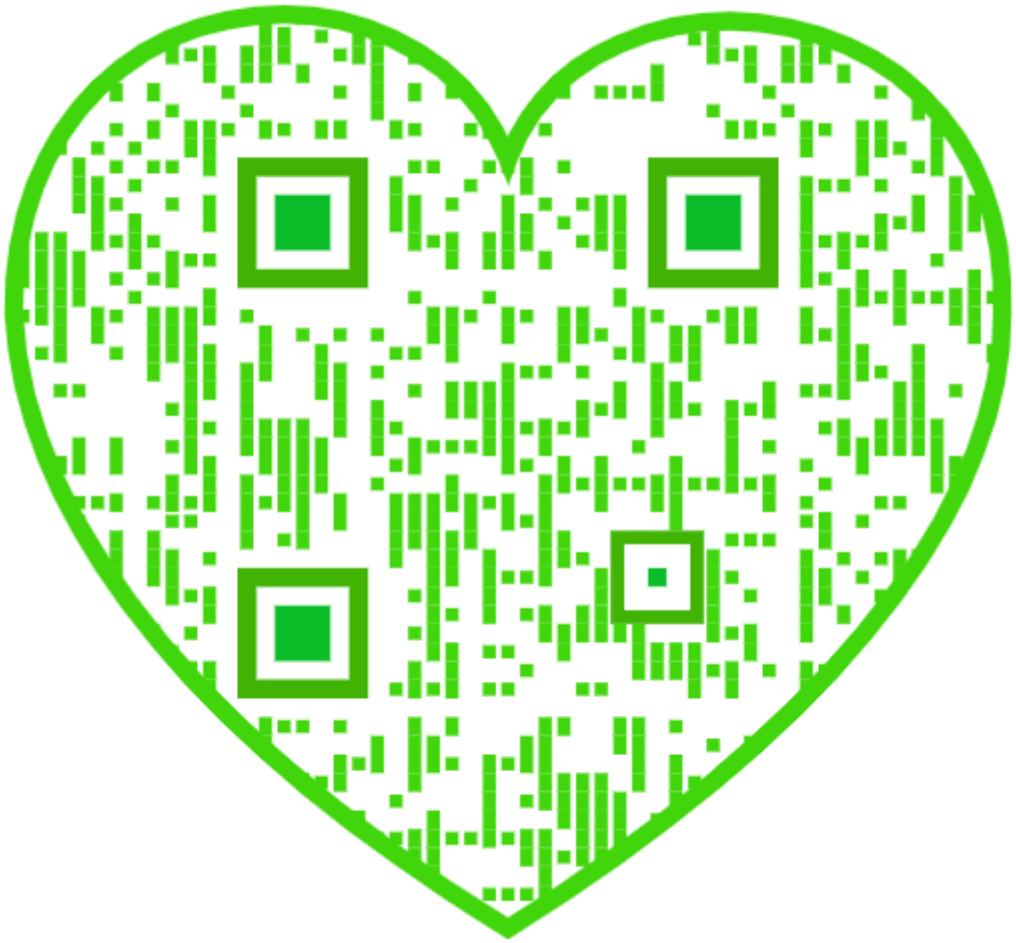

CHRISTIAN ETHICS:

OR

MORAL PHILOSOPHY

ON THE

PRINCIPLES OF DIVINE REVELATION.

BY RALPH WARDLAW, D. D.

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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

TO THE FIRST AMERICAN EDITION.

It is a principle which has often been affirmed and illustrated by the ablest philosophers, and which is seldom called in question at the present day, that *facts are the foundation of all correct theory.* This principle is so generally adopted in *physical* science, that a man who should bring forward a philosophical theory, not founded in facts, would be regarded as a dreamer; and whatever strength of mind and plausibility of reasoning he might exhibit, his theory would gain no credit among enlightened men. This principle, in all its extent, is as applicable to moral science, as to physical.

But here we are met with a serious question: What shall we do with this acknowledged principle in a case where the facts appear to favor different and clashing theories? Evidently we must still found our theory on *facts*, only taking those which are most common, and palpable, and least liable to misapprehension. As to other facts, which are of a doubtful nature, and which occur but rarely, — it is reasonable to assume that, when better known, they will be perfectly reconcilable with the more common facts, and will contribute to support the same theory, enlarged perhaps, or in some way modified. What is necessary in such a case is, that we should attach the chief importance in our reasoning to plain, common facts, and in regard to others, that we should suspend our judgment till we obtain fuller information. To give prominence to facts which are obscure and of rare occurreuce, and to leave in the back ground those which are well known, and which constantly occur, would be wholly unphilosophical. And yet this is the practice of many who aspire to the character of philosophers. But true philosophy shows a more excellent way.

It leads us, for example, to adopt the Newtonian theory of astronomy, because it is supported by the whole range of well known phenomena on the earth and in the heavens; while a philosophy which is erratic or whimsical, may, on the ground of a few appearances of a doubtful character, lead to a belief in any novel or fanciful scheme.

But there is another case. A theory, well supported by facts, is still exposed to *speculative objections*. We cannot reconcile it with other acknowledged doctrines; or in some way, it involves difficulties which we are unable to solve. What is our proper course?

On this question, which presents itself more or less frequently in regard to all the principal subjects in Ethics and Theology, I shall take the liberty to offer a few suggestions; and shall offer them particularly for the consideration of those young men, who are desirous of investigating such subjects as are brought under examination in the following excellent Lectures.

That which I think of most importance is, *that we should govern ourselves wholly by evidence;* and by the evidence of *facts*, where facts are to be the basis of our reasoning. This should be our invariable rule. We should receive as true whatever has clear, conclusive proof, and nothing else. When a proposition is supported by sufficient evidence, we should believe it, and hold it fast, whatever difficulties may attend it. There is no subject of revelation, or of natural theology, which is free from difficulties; none against which speculative objections may not be urged. If these are suffered to govern us, we shall have no sound belief; particularly in those things which are of the greatest consequence. For it is generally the case, that in proportion as a doctrine rises in importance, it is exposed to the pressure of speculative difficulties. This may arise from the circumstance, that the most important subjects lie most beyond the bounds of our knowledge. The existence of such difficulties may also be considered as a trial, appointed for us by the Author of our being. It is in reality a trial. For if a man does firmly believe an important doctrine which is supported by suitable evidence, say for example the benevolence of God, or the deity of Christ, while various objections, unanswered, and by him unanswerable, lie against it; he evinces a well regulated reason, and strong faith. But if a man is not governed by evidence; if his intellectual habits are such, that the moment he begins to reflect on an important doctrine, his mind is filled with a host of difficulties; and if, instead of fixing his attention directly and chiefly upon the evidence of the

truth, he fixes it chiefly upon the objections which lie against it; he is on the very brink of skepticism. This is the case with many men of a philosophical turn of mind, and with some devoted to the gospel ministry. They have such a habit of ruminating upon the speculative difficulties which hang around moral and religious subjects, that there is scarcely a single point of truth which they heartily believe. Of course they enjoy scarcely any of the benefits of faith. For it is manifest, that the most important truths, held in a hesitating, wavering manner, can have little influence on our moral affections. If then it is the desire of any one, who is conscious of a skeptical tendency, to bring the salutary influence of moral truth upon his own mind, and secure the benefits of faith, he must break up the habit, (which was precisely the habit of Hume,) of recurring perpetually to objections and difficulties, and must accustom himself to employ his thoughts chiefly, and for the most part undividedly, upon *the truth itself, and the evidence on which it rests.* The mind becomes clear, by contemplating what is clear; while by being conversant with what is doubtful and obscure, it gathers doubt and obscurity.

If a man would engage successfully in the investigation of the subjects which are discussed in the following Lectures, he must attend to the principle above suggested; and although in the regular course of his investigations, he ought thoroughly to examine the force of all which can be alleged in opposition to the truth, and to labor after the best solution of the difficulties attending it; he ought, for the safety of his own principles, to escape as soon as may be, from the region of difficulties, and to take up his abode where the clear light of divine truth shines forth, to illuminate the understanding and heart.

I knew a young man of an inquisitive and fearless mind, and of fair promise in respect to talents and piety, who at the commencement of his theological studies, adopted the resolution, *that he would endeavor to get his mind into a state of entire indifference as to the truth of the Christian system, and that he would never receive a doctrine as true, unless it was so clearly proved and demonstrated, that no objection whatever could be brought against it.* This dangerous resolution he carried into effect. It hardly need be said to those who are in any good measure acquainted with the nature of the human mind, that he became more and more doubtful as to moral and religious truth, till in the end he believed in

nothing, but "in all unbelief." His faith and hope and happiness were wrecked. He forsook the throne of grace, restrained prayer, and neglected the duties of the Christian life. A horrible gloom gathered around his soul, and the shadow of eternal death settled upon all his future prospects. And it cost that dear youth unutterable darkness and distress, and years of repentance, before he was restored to faith, and communion with God, and the comforts of the Holy Spirit. He now views it as a miracle of mercy, that he was not left to perish in that more that midnight darkness in which he involved himself, not by a fair and impartial examination of the doctrines of religion, but by pride, rashness, and a renunciation of divine truth. He has learnt that, whatever may be the boast of free-thinkers, *the love of God and his word is the only impartial state of mind.*

Let me say farther, that, if a man would peruse these Lectures in a profitable manner, he must be sure to obtain the knowledge which is necessary previously to the right understanding of those profound principles of moral science which are here elucidated. What could we do towards understanding one of the most sublime and difficult propositions in Geometry, without having attended to the simple, elementary principles on which it depends? And what can a man expect but disappointment and confusion, who attempts at once to comprehend the profoundest doctrines in moral science, before making himself familiar with the simple truths from which they result? Many a man will find himself unable to get clear and satisfactory conceptions of the principles set forth in these Lectures, because he has not made the attainments which are prerequisite. In his pursuit of knowledge, he has not travelled far enough to arrive at the position, from which he can clearly survey the objects here exexhibited: or if perchance he may have travelled far enough, he has not travelled in the right direction. Such a man must prepare himself to understand the subjects here examined, by a farther pursuit of knowledge in the same direction, or by retracing his steps, and pursuing it in a different direction. And although he may not now be able by a single movement to reach the elevation at which he aims, he can reach it by gradual advances.

I have already mentioned it as a fundamental principle, that we must reason from facts; and that if we construct a system, we must make it rest on facts as its basis. Every true philosopher, like the Author of the following Lectures, rigidly observes this principle, and

from the beginning to the end of his labors, *has to do with facts.* And he keeps it in mind that *facts are facts* whether brought to light in one way or another. So far as their reality or importance is concerned, the particular manner in which they are made known can be of no essential consequence. But how few are the writers on any branch of mental philosophy, who proceed on this principle, and give as much weight to the facts which are made known by the word of God, as to those which fall under their own observation. And yet, if we are Christians, we must hold, that the facts which the Scriptures disclose, are as certain, and in all respects invested with at least as much importance and authority, as if discovered by our own unaided reason and experience. Indeed is not the very circumstance, that God has interposed in a supernatural manner, to make known certain things which could not be discovered in any other way, a plain indication, that they are of special importance? For unless they are so, why has the Maker of the world, for the sake of revealing them, set aside those laws of nature, which are his established modes of giving instruction, and by which our knowledge is commonly bounded? Can we suppose that the only wise God would do this, were not the facts brought to light in this extraordinary manner, of extraordinary importance? And we find that what we might thus naturally infer from the mere fact of a divine revelation, is made perfectly manifest, by the considering of the nature of those things which revelation makes known. For it is clear that nothing can be of greater moment, than the peculiar truths which the sacred writers teach respecting our depravity and ruin, our redemption by Christ, and the results of our present conduct in a state of endless retribution. The facts which are revealed in relation to these subjects cannot be overlooked in any system of moral science, without leaving that system essentially defective. Who can form a just opinion of our moral nature, without considering that depravity which is one of its most prominent characteristics? Who can form a right estimate of our propensities, while he takes no notice of that propensity to sin which is found in every human being, and which introduces disorder among all the other propensities, and threatens ruin to the soul? According to the testimony of Scripture, and of experience too, moral evil as *really* belongs to us, in our present degenerate state, as any one of our animal appetites, or intellectual powers. You can as easily find a man without the appetite of hunger, or without understanding or memory, as you can find an unregenerate

man without a fixed, unvarying propensity to sin. The Bible contains full evidence of this. And on this single account, the moral depravity of man would deserve to be held as an essential article in the science of man's moral nature. For the Bible declares what is true, and places every truth in its proper light. If we do not recognize this, we virtually renounce Christianity.

But the depravity of man has also the testimony of universal experience. This certainly should have secured it a distinct and prominent place in the systems of those philosophers, who profess to be governed wholly by experience. Had David Hume been true to his boasted principle of *experience*, he would have been among the first to assert the degeneracy of man, and would have traced to that cause many operations of the understanding and heart. And there is no way to account for it that philosophers, distinguished for the acuteness of their observations on other qualities of man's intelligent and moral nature, have taken so little notice of his depravity, except by the influence of that very depravity on their own minds. Dr. Wardlaw has detected and clearly exposed this essential deficiency in most of the systems of ethical science which have been published to the world, — even in those which have come from the pens of *Christian* philosophers; and has shown how the neglect of this prominent fact has misguided them in their speculations on the most important principles in morals. In a word, he has shown that whatever their eminent talents and laborious researches may have accomplished, they have not produced a system which deserves the honorable name of CHRISTIAN ETHICS. Nor will such a system ever be produced, except on *the model of the New Testament*.

That *Christ died for our sins*, is also a fact which cannot be omitted in the history of the human mind. It is a fact of indescribable consequence in regard to the moral government of God, and the state and prospects of man. The divine administration towards us, and everything which relates to our condition, is essentially affected by that event. It is through the influence of Christ's death that any of our race become holy. To the same influence the unholy are indebted for all the good which they enjoy in this world, and for their opportunity to obtain eternal life. And the death of Christ, as an object of faith, has more power to constrain men to put away sin and obey the divine law, than any other motive. Now if the death of Christ has such an influence on the character and state

of man, and is thus intermingled with the best exercises of his mind; how can it be overlooked by those who undertake to exhibit right views of the mind, and of whatever has an important influence upon its affections? A philosophical account of man's moral nature as developed in the Christian church, unconnected with the cross of Christ, would be as defective, as a philosophical account of vegetation, unconnected with the influence of the sun. Whoever would take a just view of the most interesting operations and states of the human mind, must place the doctrine of the cross before him in a clear and prominent light. And it would be easy for the Author of these Lectures to show, that the neglect of this doctrine constitutes as radical a defect in the principal systems of mental science, and leads to as hurtful errors, as the neglect of our depravity.

The same is true of another grand peculiarity of the Christian system, that is, *the influence of the Holy Spirit.* That Divine Spirit is indeed an agent distinct from the human mind, and his influence altogether above the influence of any power or principle natural to man. But we are taught that the Divine Spirit dwells in all the pious and holy, influencing their affections, prompting them to obedience, and fitting them for spiritual enjoyment. And can that be a just account of the human mind, which leaves out of view its most important states? And can that be a just account of the causes which operate upon the mind, which leaves out that divine influence, which is the spring of all spiritual life and joy in the saints, and which awakens so many thoughts of God and eternity and so many convictions of truth and duty even in the unrenewed? Are not the holy dispositions and feelings and actions of Christians well known facts? Do we not discover in them the only moral excellence of man? What then shall we say of those writers on the philosophy of the mind, who descant freely on all the other states of mind, and on their causes, while they overlook those most important states which are found in the regenerate mind, and take no notice of that work of God's power, which is marked with such peculiar excellence and glory? How will such authors and their works appear in that approaching period, when the sanctifying power of the Spirit will be general, and the exercises of holy love and faith and penitence will constitute the common characteristic of man's moral nature? What will then become of that mental philosophy which is made up of those facts merely, which appertain to the natural mind, and neglects those, which will stand out as of chief moment in the

experience of a renovated world? The authors of such a philosophy, however numerous, and however justly celebrated for their intellectual powers, will then be out of date, and the veil of respectful oblivion will be drawn over them, because they made up their systems without any regard to the most important and at that time the most common and obvious phenomena of the human mind. Unnumbered volumes, written with consummate genius and industry, and once studied and referred to as standards of truth, will be laid aside, because they do not agree with the deep spiritual consciousness of the redeemed, and contain systems which are built upon partial and erroneous views of the mind, both in its natural and in its renewed state. The time is coming, I hope it is drawing near, when philosophy will be sanctified; when no Ethics will be received, but CHRISTIAN Ethics. The system of moral science here exhibited by Dr. Wardlaw, will, I doubt not, be regarded with public favor in the best days of the church, because it honestly recognizes the humiliating fact of our moral degeneracy and our redemption as taught by the Apostles, and derives illumination from HIM who is THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

Were I to write a Review of these Lectures of my highly respected Friend and Correspondent, I should point out a few passages where I think the Author misapprehends the meaning of some American Divines; and a few other passages on which I should find it necessary to bestow more attention, before I could be perfectly satisfied with the reasoning they contain. But this volume, as a whole, I reckon among the best which this age or any age has produced. And I beg leave to express my peculiar satisfaction, that it is now to be issued from the American press, and to recommend it, with all my heart, to ministers of the Gospel, and to enlightened Christians, and especially to Theological Students.

LEONARD WOODS.

Theological Seminary, Andover,
Jan. 10, 1835.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

By some, the author fears, the Title of this work may be deemed presumptuous, and may possibly be censured, as holding out promises of more than it performs, and so of exciting expectations which it does not fulfill. He wishes it to be regarded as strictly and exclusively *elementary*, — having for its design to invesitgate and ascertain *principles*, not at all to unfold the details of duty, or furnish a practical commentary on the commandments. Had not the Title, indeed, been formally announced in the opening of the first Lecture, he would now have been disposed to modify it to — *Elements* of Moral Philosophy, on the Principles of Divine Revelation. In forming an estimate, therefore, of his labors, the critic, he trusts, will bear in mind the avowed extent of their aim, and will not condemn, as a defect, the want of that which they were never intended to supply. He will himself be satisfied, if by those intelligent fellow Christians, whose approbation, next to that of his Divine Master, he is solicitous to obtain, he shall be thought to have at all succeeded even in his limited object, and so to have done any effectual service to the cause of Truth.

There are two things which the Title presupposes, or considers as assumed, — the existence of God, and the authority of the Scriptures as a revelation from Him. The former evidently lies at the foundation of all religious principle, — of all moral obligation. Deny a God, and you annihilate both. Creatures, indeed, (if we may speak of *creatures*, when we are supposing *no Creator*,) finding themselves in possession of existence, whencesoever they may have received it, and experiencing association to be in a high degree conducive to their mutual benefit, might consult and come to agreement respecting the rules by which their reciprocal conduct should be regulated: — and, having so agreed, they might be said to have come under obligation to one another for the observance of these rules. But there could neither be any will or authority superior to their own, nor any previous source or principle of obligation, by which they could be at all bound in *framing* the laws of their intercourse. The

obligation, such as it is, would be entirely self-originated and self-imposed. — And, as to personal obligation, independent of the social compact, it is manifest there could be nothing of the kind. No individual could be bound to act in one way rather than in another. There could be no law but his own will, choosing and determining according as circumstances might dictate what was most for his own interest, or his own enjoyment. — I have no argument, then, in the following disquisitions, with the *atheist.*

But neither, strictly speaking, have I any argument with the *infidel.* In assuming the authority of revelation, I occupy no common ground with him who denies it. It is to the believers of its authority, — it is to fellow Christians, that I make my appeal; and especially to those amongst them, to whom Divine Providence has assigned situations of influence, in disciplining the minds, nurturing and maturing the principles, and forming the personal or official characters, of the rising youth. I dare hardly avow my heart's *wish*, lest the avowal should be interpreted into a presumptuous expectation of contributing to its fulfillment — that the science of our land were more generally and decidedly "baptized into Christ." Would it were so! Would that Christians were more on the alert in looking to their principles! — more sensitively alive to the danger arising from the intrusion of an insidious philosophy, in adulterating the purity, obscuring the simplicity, lowering the tone, and paralyzing the authority, of the truths of God! — When I say, however, that I have no argument with the infidel, let me not be misunderstood. I mean not, that there is nothing in the following pages bearing any relation to the controversy between him and the believer. On the contrary, I conceive the just exhibition of the moral principles of the sacred Volume to form a very important and interesting branch of the *internal evidence* of its truth. I believe the Bible to be its own best witness. Like all the other works of God, it bears upon it the impress of its Author; and being, more than all the rest, if I may so express myself, a *moral work*, it bears the special impress of moral character. — It is obviously, however, no part of my province, in such a series of Discourses, to establish the authority of the sacred record, but only to bring to the test of its principles the varieties of human theory.

In attempting, with all diffidence, this weighty task, it would have been interminable to bring forward in systematic order and duly proportioned prominence, and to defend by their respectively appropri-

its modes of argument, the various distinguishing doctrines of revelation; thus presenting, in regular form, an entire *system of divinity*, as an introductory basis for a superstructure of morals. What the doctrines are which I regard as constituting the peculiar truths of revealed religion, I have chosen rather to leave to be discovered from the tenor of the discussions: — and, as a minister of the word of God, I should be ashamed and grieved to have ever so expressed myself, as that any attentive reader should for one moment be at a loss to apprehend the views of those doctrines which I entertain. The first Lecture will sufficiently show the light in which I regard all *trimming*, on such subjects, between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of men.

There is only one point, on which, since the delivery of the Lectures, I have at times felt a rising and lingering regret that I had not insisted somewhat more formally and at large: — I refer to *the present state and character of human nature*. In the Lectures, the position has, to a great degree at least, been hypothetically assumed, that the nature of man is not now what it originally was; — that it is fallen, and in a state of alienation from God. And yet, after all, in assuming this position, what more have I done than assume the authority of revelation? The doctrine stands out in the divine record with prominent notoriety, by frequent, unequivocal statement, — by manifest and pervading implication, — and by the whole bearing of its peculiar discoveries, respecting the divine provisions for the restoration of this apostate nature to its original principles, — for bringing it back to God, and to the purity and the bliss from which it fell. — Nor is there any doctrine in support of which, on the principle of the inductive philosophy, an appeal might be made, to a more overwhelming multiplicity of facts in the history, and more especially in the *religious* history, of the human race. I refer, in a particular manner, to the fact of the early, universal, and permanent loss of the knowledge of the true God, — although originally possessed, and although kept incessantly before the mind by remembrancers the clearest and the most impressive in every department of creation, — and the substitution in his room, of all the varieties of polytheistic idolatry, the most fantastic, cruel, and impure, — in every respect "a lie" against the only Deity. This one fact I cannot but regard as of itself decisive; — affirming it, with all confidence, to have been *impossible* in a world where God was loved, — nay, in any world where there was not, in the nature of its inhabitants, an invet-

erate and fearful tendency to forget and to depart from him. — And to this might be added a no less confident appeal; amongst all classes and descriptions of society, to present and universal observation, experience, and consciousness. Let these bear witness whether this be a world in which the *love of God* is the dominant principle, — in which *piety* bears the sway! Bring the question to the test of all the ordinary modes in which affection is accustomed to express itself. Were it tried by *this* criterion, there could be but one conclusion in every unprejudiced mind, — that we are not in a world of loyalty and love, but of fearful disaffection and rebellion. And the question of human depravity *ought* to turn on this one point, — the *state of the heart towards God.* There is no need for expatiating on the wide and varied field of men's intercourse with each other, — though here too there might be found abundant proofs of our general position: — the inquiry should be concentrated on the one criterion stated; — love to God, or enmity against him, being the essence, respectively, of good or of evil; — and the latter being capable of subsistence and operation, even under its most virulent forms, in the very midst of many of those outward decencies, and social amiabilities, and "moral accomplishments," which are naturally produced by the conventional virtues of the world. These are virtues, indeed, which, on the principle of mutual benefit before adverted to, might, to no inconsiderable extent, be creditably maintained even in a community of atheists. — But I must resist the temptation to enter further into this most interesting theme. The number and variety of points in it, which rise up in array before my mind, demanding successive notice, satisfy me that it could not be duly discussed, without a treatise much longer than it would be at all seemly to introduce here.

I leave it to the Committeee of the Congregational Library to prefix their own explanation of the occasion on which this series of Lectures was delivered. — It is right for *me*, however, to state, that I owe my appointment for the *first* series to the circumstance of my learned and excellent friend, the Rev. Dr. John Pye Smith, having found it necessary, from special engagements, to decline the acceptance of it. Many will regret this besides myself.

R. W.

Glasgow, Nov. 12, 1833.

CHRISTIAN ETHICS.

LECTURE I.

ON THE RESPECTIVE PROVINCES OF PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY.

I AM at a loss, my friends, to determine to which of the two charges I should be most unwilling to expose myself; —whether, on the one hand, to the charge of presumption, in having consented to undertake the task assigned me, of delivering the first series of the "CONGREGATIONAL LECTURE,"—or, on the other hand, to the charge of affectation, which might attach itself to any apology I might now, however sincerely, attempt to frame for such presumption. I deem it, therefore, preferable to proceed at once, without any apologetic preamble, to the task itself; leaving the merits or demerits of the execution, whatever they may be, to the candid and liberal judgment of my audience.

The general suject of the proposed series of discourses, has already been announced to the public, under the title of "Christian Ethics; or, Moral Philosophy on the principles of Divine Revelation:" and the first topic in the series, to be discussed in the present lecture, (a lecture

which may, in a good degree, be considered as introductory,) is, — "The respective provinces of Philosophy and Theology." I take for my text the words of the Apostle Paul —

1 Cor. I. 20.

"Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"

Treatment of human wisdom by the inspired writers.

Is this the language of a weak enthusiast, depreciating human science, and treating with disdain what he does not himself possess? Is it the utterance of a vain-glorious pretender, who, in the loftiness of his spiritual empiricism, looks down, with a scornful pity, on uninitiated minds? It is neither. It is the deliberate verdict of one who "speaks forth the words of truth and soberness;" of one who, himself propounding views of Deity, — of his character, his administration, and his will, — incomparably surpassing aught that the unaided wisdom of man had previously produced, had, in this very fact, his divine warrant for the low estimate of that wisdom, which, in this passage, he pronounces. The estimate relates to the exercise of the human intellect, not in any of the departments of natural science, but in regard to what this same writer denominates "the things of God;" and the truth of it is established by an appeal to the experience of all the preceding centuries of the world's history: "For after that, in the wisdom of God, *the world by wisdom knew not God*, it pleased God, by the preaching of foolishness,* to save them that believe."

* The words in the original are ambiguous — διὰ τῆς μωρίας τοῦ κηρύγματος. Our translators have rendered them "by the foolishness of preaching." The difference, as to the sense, is not material. It may, however, be observed, that the foolishness (in

Most assuredly, the sacred writers do not express themselves in terms of submissive deference to the wise men of this world. If they were inspired, how could they? The incongruity would have been monstrous. It would have been the intellect of the infinite Creator bowing to that of the feeble and fallible creature! I do not mean to say, that the mere circumstance of their disparaging what those wise men themselves honored with the designation of "divine philosophy," is itself to be regarded as an evidence of their inspiration. Far from it: the disparagement might have been of such a kind as, instead of furnishing proof of their inspiration, would only have made manifest their self-conceited presumption. It is not, we are all aware, the first nor the thousandth time that ignorance has talked disdainfully of knowledge, and meanly depreciated what it could not attain. Vanity has been the attendant of limited, and humility of enlarged attainments; the one, the characteristic of a little, the other, of a great mind. While, therefore, deference to the wisdom of men is incompatible with the possession of inspiration, contempt of that wisdom is perfectly compati-

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the estimate of men, for that is what the Apostle speaks of) did not lie in the *preaching*, but in the *doctrine preached*. And to this, accordingly, it is that the term, immediately afterwards, is applied: "But we preach *Christ crucified*, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and *to the Greeks foolishness;* but to us who are called, both Jews and Greeks, *Christ* the power of God, and *the wisdom of God*. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men:" — that is, those divine discoveries, contained in the Gospel, which by men were esteemed foolishness, were indeed true wisdom; wisdom infinitely surpassing, in its principles and its practical efficiency, all the results of human intellect of which philosophers had been accustomed to boast.

ble with the want of it. All, in such a case, depends upon the *manner*. And surely, with confidence might we put it to the candid judgment of philosophy itself—even notwithstanding its rising indignation at the unceremonious refusal of its authority—whether, in the style of these writers, there be anything discernible, in the remotest degree indicative, either of the littleness of elated vanity, or the chagrin of mortified envy;—whether, on the contrary, in its unostentatious simplicity, its calm, dispassionate, dignified, conscious authoritativeness, their whole manner be not in admirable congruity with the hypothesis of their inspiration: whether, that is, on the supposition of their being inspired, they could, in this respect, have written more appropriately than they have actually done.

This treatment offensive to the wise men of this world: consequent divorce between philosophy and theology.

Still, however, to the wise men of this world, it cannot fail to be offensive, that so little weight should thus be allowed to the decisions of their cherished and adored philosophy;—nay, that its authority should even be entirely set aside, and its oracular voice silenced. And the offence, accordingly, has been taken, and has been shown. The displeasure has been but ill-concealed by the affected contempt. It has been determined, that, if Theology *will* be thus exclusive, so shall Philosophy. If the latter must in no degree dictate to the former, neither shall the former to the latter. Each shall have its own department: and, if the divine interdicts the intrusion of the philosopher, the philosopher, with a jealousy no less peremptory, will prohibit the officious interference of the divine. The latter shall have the same legitimate title to hold as truth the results of his researches and processes of ratiocination,

within his own province, as the former has to hold as truth the dictates of his accredited oracles.

Unreasonableness of this divorce, and unhappy effects of it to the interests of truth.

All this might be well enough, and there might, on such principles, be a treaty of mutual forbearance, could the respective provinces be kept entirely distinct. But this is manifestly impracticable. To *physical* science, it is true, or natural philosophy, (in as far as its province of investigation is concerned,) there is but little in common with theology. The departments of the two are more decidedly distinct; so that there is less danger of their coming into conflicting contact. Not, however, by any means, that they are without connection. Their connection is close and interesting. In one branch of theology,—that which is usually designated *natural religion*,—physical science is a handmaid, whose services are of essential value. The discoveries and demonstrations of the natural philosopher either furnish the evidences, or place them in the clearest and most satisfactory light, from which we ascertain the fundamental article of all religion and morals, the existence of an intelligent and almighty Creator. In the visible universe, it is true, manifold are the proofs of this great truth, which it requires not the research of profound science to elicit. Were it otherwise, there would be a large proportion of mankind, of whom it could hardly with fairness be affirmed, that their ignorance of the true God was without excuse. But in very many particulars, philosophy throws a clearer and more determinate light upon the argument; inasmuch as the farther its investigations have extended, and the more rigid the scrutiny which, in these investigations, it has employed, the more demonstrative has the manifestation become of the unima-

provable perfection of those works in which the skill of the great Artificer is discovered.

While physical science thus supplies theology with argument, in laying the very foundation of her system, there is another relation between them, often too little regarded, but of great practical value. Besides furnishing and elucidating the evidences of natural religion, it ought to be the business of this philosophy to collect from the whole system of nature materials for devotion. Whatever philosophers themselves may think of it, there is not a more important end which science has it in its power to effect, than thus elevating the soul to its Divine Maker, in the sentiments and emotions of "reverence and godly fear," and of grateful adoration and praise. How deeply is it to be deplored, that science and devotion should so frequently have been disunited, and that philosophy, by busying the mind about the works of Deity, should, in so many instances, have induced forgetfulness of their Author, and have tended, instead of kindling, to quench the flame of piety! One of ourselves, a poet of our own, has said —

"An undevout astronomer is mad."

— But what is devotion? We cannot consent that a man shall be regarded as devout, merely because he recognizes an almighty and intelligent Agent in the wonders which he discovers and describes. How very often does it happen, that, by such minds, Deity is contemplated and introduced (in terms, it may be, of elegant and enthusiastic eulogy) under no other character than that of *the first and greatest of artists;* — an artist in whose incomparable skill the philosopher, with a conscious elation,

almost feels himself a participant; inasmuch as he who discovers the secrets of a well-adjusted plan that lie hidden from the vulgar eye, regards himself as standing next in order to the inventor and framer of it; he who detects and unfolds the beautiful intricacies of an ingenious mechanism, dividing the palm of ingenuity with its original constructor.

Such views of Deity may be entertained, such eulogies of Deity may be pronounced, while there is no complacency in his moral excellencies,—no holy sympathy of heart with the purity of his nature, the righteousness of his government, or the grace of his gospel. And without this, there is no true devotion. There is the admiration of the philosopher, but not the piety of the saint. The admiration is akin to the emotions of the musical amateur, when he is fixed in extasy by the full harmony of an oratorio of Handel: he fancies himself devout; and yet there is little, if anything, more than unwonted sensibility to the powers of sound—a sensibility which gives itself utterance, when the entrancing harmony has died away upon the ear, rather in terms of rapture at the inimitable skill of the composer, than in the adoration of the majesty and grace of Him whom the composition professes to extol.

Amongst philosophical men, there have been, and there are, not a few eminent exceptions to these remarks;—men, in whom science has elevated piety, and piety has sanctified science. Our lamentation is, that a coalition so natural and seemly should ever be wanting.*

But it is not with natural philosophy, it is with moral

* Notes and Illustrations. Note A.

science, that theology chiefly interferes. It is of these two that I have pronounced the provinces inseparable by any definite and mutually exclusive line of demarcation. There can be no boundary drawn for the philosophical moralist, that does not inclose a portion, far from inconsiderable, of the territory of the theologian. Their ground, on many points, is unavoidably common. Their lines of partition, therefore, are not so much determined by the subjects which they respectively embrace, as by their principles of argumentation, their sources of evidence, and the authorities to which each appeals and pays deference. The theologian exhibits the proofs of divine revelation; and, having established its authority, settles all questions in religion and morals by a direct appeal to its sacred lessons: — the philosopher carries on his own researches in his own way, in the spirit of independence of all such authority, and arrives at his own conclusions.

If, as may not unfrequently happen, the doctrines of the one and the decisions of the other are at variance, and that, not by a shade of difference merely, but, by direct contrariety, there is no help for it: — each must be regarded as right on his own principles and within his appropriate sphere.

Can anything be imagined more unfortunate than this position of parties to the interests of truth? — as if a thing could be true on one ground, and false on another? — true, when tried by this set of principles, and false when tried by that! — theologically right and philosophically wrong, — or theologically wrong and philosophically right! The philosopher, we shall suppose, works out the establishment of some favorite point by his own process of mataphysical reasoning; the divine, by an appeal to

his authorities and sources of evidence, arrives at an opposite result: that is not the sage's concern; it pertains to another department, — to a different *chair*, — with which he has nothing to do, and from which, as he does not presume to interfere on his part, he reasonably looks for a reciprocity of non-interference on the part of its occupant. The conclusion to which he has himself come, may, for aught he knows, be bad divinity; but he is confident it is sound philosophy: and this is all that it concerns him to mind.

The discovery of truth the only legitimate object of all philosophy.

Now, in the name of common sense, what ought to be the sole inquiry with every man who takes to himself, or who deserves from others, the designation of a philosopher? Should not the exclusive question be, — and should not the answer to it be sought with equal simplicity and earnestness of purpose, — WHAT IS TRUTH? What other object can there be, of aught that is entitled to be called philosophy, but the discovery of truth? Of what conceivable use or value are all the investigations and reasonings of philosophy, if not for the ascertaining of truth? And, in order to arrive at truth, is it not the proper business and the imperative duty of the philosopher, to leave no quarter unexplored, where evidence of any description can be found; nothing whatsoever unexamined that promises to throw even a single ray of light on the subject of his inquiry, one solitary beam on his path that may contribute to guide him to a right result? Can anything be more irrational, more unworthy of a mind that is really honest and in earnest in its desires after truth, than for him who professes to be in pursuit of it to allege, respecting any source of information or department of evidence, that he

has nothing to do with it? No man of sound principle and enlightened judgment will ever sit down satisfied with a conclusion which he knows to have been formed on a partial investigation, or so long as there remains unexamined any accessible source of information or of proof which may possibly shake its stability — nay, for aught he knows, may even demonstrate its fallacy, and constrain its rejection.

Everything, without exception, should be regarded as pertaining to the province of the genuine philosopher that holds out any promise of conducting him to truth. This should be the *ultima Thule* of all his voyages of discovery. Like a skillful navigator, he will make use of every information that can enable him to chart out his course, so as to reach it with the greatest safety, directness, and speed. If he misses it in one direction, he will try another, availing himself of every wind and of every current that may bear him to his wished for destination.

The application of these general principles will be already apparent. In the Bible, we possess a document, by whose contents a great variety both of facts and sentiments are materially affected. It professes to be of the remotest antiquity, and of the very highest authority. Suppose, then, that, by his own process of argumentation, a philosopher has arrived at a particular conclusion respecting the truth or falsehood of some fact or opinion. You say to him — "I find something very different from your conclusions in the statements of this book." He answers, with all imaginable coolness, — "It may be so; that does not come within my legitimate range; it belongs to the province of the divine. It is his business, the best way he can, to make out the consistency of the state-

ments of the Bible with the decisions of philosophy. If there be a discrepancy, it is unfortunate; but I cannot help it: — the harmonizing of the two lies not with me, but with him." But why so? What good reason is there, why the *onus* of finding a principle of reconciliation should be made to rest entirely on the theologian? We cannot consent to this. We cannot quiescently permit philosophy to assume so lofty a bearing; to take her own decisions for granted, and, with the port and tone of a self-sufficient supereiliousness, leave the divine to make what he can of their consistency with his Bible. We cannot allow the authority of this document to be thus unceremoniously left out of the account. We insist upon it, that, on every point respecting which it delivers a testimony, the proofs of its authority, or of its want of authority, are among the evidences, on that point, which every lover of truth — that is, every true philosopher — should feel himself under imperative obligation carefully to examine.

As the philosophy is of no sterling worth, that conducts not to truth; if the authority of the document can be established, and the verity of its statements consequently ascertained, then it becomes, on all matters of which it treats, *the only philosophy;* unless we are determined to dignify with the honorable appellation a system of falsehood. If any man is prepared to avow, that he would prefer falsehood, as the result of one process of inquiry, to truth, when ascertained by another, — then may he, consistently, leave out of his investigation the evidences on which the claims of this document rest. But should we call such a man a philosopher? It were a miserable misnomer; inasmuch as no procedure could

be more thoroughly unphilosophical, than to refuse any light, be it what it may, that promises to conduct to what is the sole end of all rational inquiry.

Exemplification of these principles— Allow me to illustrate my meaning by a case or two, in the way of exemplification. They are not at all connected with our present subject, but merely explanatory of the principle, which it is my aim to establish. I purposely indeed select my illustrative examples from departments unconnected with the one under discussion, that I may at once avoid anticipation, and keep myself clear of any charge of prejudging the question. They shall be cases that relate not to doctrine but to fact.

1. In the case of the common origin of mankind. It has been a subject of controversy, whether, as is usually supposed, the race of mankind in all its varieties, had a common origin;—whether, that is, all these varieties sprung from the same pair.—Suppose, then, that, on an extensive survey, and a minute inspection of the various tribes of men on the surface of the globe, there are found appearances both for and against the ordinary belief of a common original stock. Suppose, if you will, the appearances on the two sides of the hypothesis to be even nearly on a balance, and to leave some little room for hesitation and scepticism. In this posture of the case, here is a document, which, in the most explicit terms, affirms the common origin; and which proceeds, throughout, upon the assumption of God's having "made of *one blood* all nations of men to dwell on the face of the whole earth." Without intending, in the least degree, to lay any interdict on philosophical investigation, to put a stop to the continued collection and comparison of facts, and the free and un-

embarrassed discussion of whatever these facts may seem to indicate, — my simple affirmation is, that the authority of this document is fairly entitled to be examined upon the question: — nay more, — that it is not only so entitled, but that the man who professes to be actuated by a sincere desire to ascertain the truth, does not act consistently with his professions, so long as he either refuses or neglects such examination.

I am not now assuming the authority of the document, and attempting to silence philosophy, by an appeal to divine testimony: all I contend for is, that its claims to authority be fairly investigated; that the competency or incompetency of the witness be ascertained; that his pretensions be not set aside without inquiry. He may not, on the one hand, be found worthy of confidence; or, on the other, his deposition may be so attested as to render it creditable, material, and even decisive. But, whichsoever of these may be the result, the question at issue has not, we affirm, been fully, impartially, and in the true spirit of philosophy, investigated, if the pretensions of the witness be not candidly inquired into, and the credit due to his testimony correctly appreciated: — and, on this principle, the entire evidence, in all its variety, of the genuineness, the authenticity, and the divine inspiration, of this document, does come, not legitimately only, but imperatively and indispensably, within the range of investigation belonging to this question; — there being nothing more pregnant with folly, than summarily to discard, without a deliberate and rigid examination of his character and credentials, any guide, who promises to lead our steps to the oracle, where doubts may be settled, and truth satisfactorily learned.

2. In the case of the Deluge.

The same principles might be further illustrated from the case of the general Deluge. Various conflicting theories have been framed, respecting the cause or causes of particular appearances which present themselves to scientific inquirers, on and under the surface of our globe: one geologist demonstrating that these appearances cannot be accounted for on any other hypothesis, than that of the earth, at some remote period, having been subjected to a catastrophe of this description; while a second, pronouncing such a cause totally incompetent to explain the phenomena, has recourse to others, real or conjectural, which, in his estimation, are both more appropriate, and more adequate. In these circumstances, here is an ancient document, in which the awful event is recorded, and its more awful cause is assigned. Is no heed to be given to the claims of such a record? Suppose scientific investigation to leave the case undecided — *adhuc sub judice;* — is that man entitled to the character of a lover of truth, who will be satisfied to let it remain in this undetermined state, rather than even examine the evidence on which the authority of this document rests? I presume there can be but one answer to this question, unless philosophy is prepared to disown the love of truth as a principle of her character.

General application of principles: —1. To the question whether the Bible be a revelation from God.

I may frame these statements more generally; and, in their general form, without any abatement of decision. — With every man of sound wisdom, the very first of all inquiries ought, without question, to be, Have we, or have we not, in the book called the Holy Scriptures, a revelation from God? This is an inquiry which no sane man can treat with lightness; nor can we allow any man

to deserve the designation of a philosopher, who has not bent the entire energies of his mind to its investigation and settlement; — sifting out every atom of proof, — adjusting the balance with impartial accuracy, and giving to every argument its legitimate weight. I know that there are some self-called philosophers, who will receive such an assertion as I am about to make with a sneer of ineffable scorn, — but I shrink not on that account, from making it, confident as I am that, even in their minds, the disdain is either the offspring of an ignorant vanity, or is not in harmony with the secret dictates of their sober judgment; — *that there is no one inquiry whatever, which ought to take precedence of this, or to be prosecuted with anything like an equal solicitude for a true result.*

Nothing can well be more insensate, than for a man to be spending his time, and taxing to the uttermost his intellectual resources, and exhausting his mental energies, in exploring, and reasoning, and laboriously searching for truth, — "feeling after it, if haply he may find it," — and in the end arriving at no certainty, but only landing himself in the dim and dubious twilight of distressing conjecture; when, by first ascertaining, from a due examination of his credentials, the trust-worthiness and capacity of an offered guide, he may be conducted at once to his object, and enjoy the clear sunshine of intelligent and settled conviction. — In all that I have thus said, I have spoken of what *ought to be.* I am not unaware, nor unmindful, of the prejudice and bias that exists in every mind against the actual discoveries of revelation; — but I can say no more at present, than that all such bias and prejudice is wrong, and has in it not

merely the spirit of folly, but the essential element of moral pravity.

2. To the question how such a revelation is to be used.

I have hitherto spoken hypothetically. Allow me now to assume the divine authority of the Bible, as having been established by satisfactory evidence. The next question is, — What, on this assumption, becomes our duty? And is there another answer than one, which, by any sound and sober mind, can be returned to this question? On the principles of common sense and of true science, who can hesitate? The supposition is, that the divine authority of the record has been satisfactorily ascertained: — what inquiry, then, can possibly remain, but the inquiry, "What saith the Scripture?" What are the lessons which the record teaches? I am aware, that the nature of its lessons comes, to a certain extent, amongst the previous proofs for or against its authority; — but I am not now considering the process of argument by which the point of authority has been settled; I am proceeding on the assumption, that by a harmony of external, internal, and experimental evidence, that point has been brought to a satisfactory decision. The sole object of investigation comes then to be, — the meaning of the language in which the intimations of the Divine Oracles are conveyed. It *must* come to this. The questioning of any of their discoveries, as contrary to reason, and inconsistent with otherwise ascertained principles of truth, is then out of place. It ought to have been introduced in the investigation of evidence. The present assumption is, that such investigation is over, and has terminated in the decision that the book is divine. In these circumstances, we must take high ground in behalf of revelation. Phi-

losophy and theology stand, in this respect, on a widely different footing. The philosopher, as I have already said, having arrived at his conclusion, would, with all possible *sang-froid*, leave it to the theologian to reconcile that conclusion with the dictates of his Bible. But, on the supposition of this Bible having been ascertained to be from God,—

"The sempiternal source of truth divine,"

we must not only modify but precisely reverse this position; unless we would exalt the wisdom of the creature above that of the Creator. So far from its belonging to the divine, to harmonize the discoveries of this inspired document with the dogmata of the philosopher, it is incumbent on the philosopher, unless he can fairly meet and set aside the proofs of its inspiration, to bring his dogmata to the test of the document. What the divine has to do, — and this we admit to be incumbent upon him, — is, to make good the authority of his standard; and, having established this, to elicit with clearness its decisions. To insist upon its being his province to reconcile these decisions with the contrary decisions (if such there be) of the philosopher, would be to assert the superior decisiveness of philosophical conclusions to that of divine intimations. We should be unfaithful to our God, and throw a disparaging insult on his name, were we thus to consent that the wisdom of "the only wise" should make its obeisance to the chair of human science; — or were we to admit that he has left his word with less conclusive evidence in its behalf, than that by which the wise men of this world can vindicate the dictates of their own sagacity.

Faultiness of some philosophical divines in lowering unintentionally the paramount authority of revelation.

Philosophical divines, it is to be feared, have at times contributed not a little to this letting down of divine revelation from its sacred pre-eminence, as the Dictator of truth. Their predilection for metaphysical speculations has occasionally appeared to gain the ascendency over the simplicity of faith in the uncompromising declarations of the "lively oracles." To save the credit of their favorite science, they have been tempted to blend its theories with their theological system, modifying the latter by the former, and accommodating the former to the latter, in such a manner, that the principles of the Gospel have been robbed of their divine simplicity, and have been so moulded into philosophical forms of statement, as hardly to be recognizable by those who have studied them only in the writings of the Apostles and Prophets. The warp and the woof of divine and human have thus been woven into a tissue of incongruous and anomalous texture. A solicitude has been discovered, to reconcile divine truths with philosophical principles, which has gone to such an extreme, as to leave it a matter of uncertaintiy, whether the philosophy or the divinity holds the surest place in the writer's convictions;—which of the two he intends to be regarded as the test of the other. This amalgamation of philosophy and theology, has, from the beginning, been a copious source of error. In deprecating, on the principles which have been stated, the divorce between the two, I would not be understood as pleading for the incorporation of the dictates of the former with the divinely simple and authoritative discoveries of the latter. These discoveries must be received as they stand, or let alone. There must be a child-like submis-

sion of the mind to divine teaching. We must "become fools that we may be wise."

Offensiveness of implicit faith to human pride.

It *must*, I repeat, come to this — But than than this, there is nothing more galling to the spirit of that "science, falsely so called," which, in modern as in ancient times, has usurped the exclusive designation of Philosophy. *Implicit faith*, to borrow the terms of the poet on another subject,

> "is its perfect scorn,
> Object of its implacable disgust."

— It puts to flight so many of its lofty and independent speculations; bringing down the wise man of this world from the proud eminence of mental self-sufficiency, and placing him, as a mere learner, a listener and asker of questions, at the feet of Prophets and Apostles; — setting him to school, with his grammar and his dictionary, to find out what it is that these men say, and in every point of which they treat, to bow without gainsaying to their authoritative decisions. This will never do. It stirs the blood of intellectual pride. It frets and chafes the haughty spirit of independent reason. Let weak narrow-minded bigots submit, in all their littleness of soul, to be thus schooled and dictated to: his must be a course of undaunted freedom of thought, — of an unfettered and excursive independence of intellect.

Yet surely no axioms can have more in them of self-evidential truth, than the positions, that, if the Bible be the word of God, it must be true; — and that, if true, it must, on the subjects of which it treats, and on which it delivers its divine lessons, be philosophy, and the only philosophy. There must be some other aim than truth in that man's view, who, on whatever subject, would lay

under interdict and proscription any branch of evidence: — and when, at any time, our appeal to the Holy Scriptures is answered with an indignant scowl, as if by such appeal we were putting fetters upon thought, and imposing silence on the tongue; — as if we were laying the ports of science under blockade, and affixing the stigma and the peril of piracy to scientific adventure; — we answer, No: we only say, and we say it with all confidence, — that philosophy acts unworthily of her own character and pretensions, if the claims of such a document are unexamined, and, without examination, refused admission in evidence; we only insist upon it, that, in the commerce of truth, *this* port be kept free of embargo as well as all the rest; and, moreover, that, on the supposition of its having been ascertained that certain descriptions of the precious article of which we are in quest can be obtained genuine from this port alone, then does it become a preposterous expenditure of time and toil, and a worse than unprofitable outlay of our intellectual resources, to be fitting out expeditions, and undertaking distant voyages, to regions from which we can bring back no cargo but what is spurious or adulterated.

Unworthy and injurious manner in which revelation is at times treated.

There is occasionally to be found amongst our philosophers, a species of respect for the Scriptures, that is, perhaps, more injurious in its tendencies, especially to the youthful mind, than a direct and open denial of their authority. While spoken of with verbal courtesy and all due deference, they are still subjected to the reasonings of men; and at times, by a miserable perversion of their words, the inspired penmen are even represented as subjecting themselves to such reasonings, recommending their doctrines

to the revision of human wisdom, and by no means demanding implicit submission. "I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say," is insidiously interpreted as a disclaimer of ultimate authority, as leaving everything which the writer dictates to be received or not, according as it does or does not coincide with the reader's own judgment. Insinuations are thrown out, — of which the influence is the more dangerous from their having the aspect of general truths, and from their being in harmony with the tendencies of corrupt nature, — that in none of our investigations should we allow our minds to be trammeled by prepossessions, and restrained from that freedom of inquiry, which is every man's inalienable birthright, and of which the due appreciation and the fearless use are the peculiar glory of philosophy. Hints are suggested, that, in our interpretations of Scripture, we may possibly be mistaken; there being, in many parts of the book, not a little obscurity: — that there may, after all, be some principle of harmony between what it testifies, or seems to testify, and the decisions of philosophy: — but, at all events, such appear to be the conclusions to which sound and unprejudiced reason conducts us; and there is nothing for it, but to leave them to the considerate candor of the reader's or hearer's own mind. Philosophy, in this way, still keeps the precedence; and the Apostles and Prophets are, with all politeness, and every assurance of the most profound respect, bowed to the door. Now, in some respects, it would be better, were they unceremoniously hooted off the stage, than thus dismissed with the simulation of courtesy. It would be more honest, and it would be less pernicious. The assurances of respect serve no other purpose, than to lessen the shock given to the prin-

ciples and feelings of those who have previously been accustomed to defer to their authority; and, by this means, they tend to open access for the easier admission of error. The sacred writers are found to stand inconveniently in the way. It would be rude to beard them, and to set them at avowed defiance. The happy art is, to slip the pupil cautiously and gently past them, without any appearance of assault or contumely, and so as that he himself shall hardly be aware of the passage that has been made for him.

The anti-evangelical spirit of much of our philosophy to be lamented;—especially for its effects upon youth.

I may be allowed here to observe, how deeply it is to be deplored, that the philosophy which issues from certain chairs of our schools of learning should be thus, in its spirit and in many of its principles, unbaptized and covertly anti-christian. I mention it the rather, for the sake of impressing, on parents and guardians of youth, the vast importance to a young man, previously to his attendance on a course of such prelections, of his being thoroughly established in the enlightened conviction of the paramount authority of revelation; so that he does not hold this conviction as the mere result of educational prejudice, but as the effect of as extensive and intelligent an acquaintance as possible with its contents, and with the harmonious dependencies of all the parts of its system of truth, of a careful study of its evidences, and, above all, of a heart-felt experience of its renewing power. If he comes under such tuition as I have been describing, with nothing in his mind, in behalf of the Bible, beyond a youthful prepossession, he runs an imminent risk. His mind will soon be bewildered. At the first suggestion of any speculation, which seems at variance with what he

has been accustomed to revere as the testimony of God, his heart may beat thick with a distressful trepidation. But he gets over the first agitation. He becomes, by degrees, enamored of the theories that are brought before him. The views are novel; the arguments in their support are unanticipated and plausible. The opinions and speculations are pleasing and captivating to the ardor of youthful fancy, and alluring to the spirit of inquisitive curiosity and independent thinking. Doubts arise and multiply. A spirit of speculative scepticism is generated, and gradually gains the ascendant. Early notions and impressions are discarded, as unfounded prejudices: and the Bible is either thrown aside as a volume of "old wives' fables;" or a heterogeneous compound of philosophical and theological opinions, ill-assorted and mutually contradictory, becomes — I can hardly say, the *creed*, for opinion is not faith, and things inconsistent and contrary cannot both be believed, — but the unsettled, confused, and fluctuating system of thought; as to the various points of which, the listless or unhappy sceptic satisfies, or tries to satisfy himself, with the trite and puerile reflection that "much may be said on both sides."

By some of my hearers I may be thought to have drawn this picture strongly. Yet I am not aware of having, in any of its shades, overlaid the coloring, or of having delineated any one of its features in caricature. It is more than my fear, it is my conviction and my knowledge, that with little if any softening, the portrait has had its prototype in fact. And I confess, that, along with the general importance and interesting nature of the discussions themselves, this consideration has contributed

not a little to settle my choice of a subject for the proposed series of lectures.*

Importance of the subject of morals, and principles on which the following discussions are to be conducted.

There cannot, certainly, be any subject higher in importance, or deeper in interest, than that of MORALS. It comprehends in it all the obligation, not of human beings alone, but of intelligent creatures universally, in all the relations they can occupy, whether to their Maker, or to each other; together with the great original principles, so far as they can be ascertained, from which these obligations arise. Such is the enlarged acceptation in which I would be understood as employing the term in those discussions, on which, with all diffidence, I am about to enter. It is my design, to treat of morals in the light of revelation, and to bring to the test of its principles, some of the leading philosophical theories of ancient and modern times. I do not mean that I am to confine myself to the simple statements of the Holy Scriptures; but only, that I would take those statements as "the light of my feet and the lamp of my path," in prosecuting every inquiry that goes at all beyond their range. I would lay it down, with all the certainty of an axiomatic principle, that divine revelation and true philosophy can never be really at variance; that it is only false philosophy that fears revelation, or that revelation needs to fear. Truth is one. There have been those, in the history of the Christian church, who have waged the most desperate war against philosophy, as "the mortal enemy of religion." Such, for example, was Daniel Hoffman, in the

* Notes and Illustrations. Note B.

end of the sixteenth century, professor of divinity at Helmstadt, whom Mosheim represents as maintaining, in the vehemence of his enmity, the singularly absurd position, "that truth was divisible into two branches, the one philosophical, and the other theological; and that what was true in philosophy was false in theology."* I need say no more of such a statement than has been already said. But, while we smile at its folly, let us not forget to consider, in mitigation of our scorn, the nature of that multiform and incomprehensible jargon which then passed under the denomination of philosophy, and the serious injury to the cause of divine truth which had arisen from the intermixture with its sublimely simple discoveries of the crude conjectures and mystical speculations of the schools. When we think of the adulteration, the debasement, the almost extinction of Christianity, whose simple elements were overwhelmed amongst the accumulated rubbish of scholastic science — "science, falsely so called" — it will not be matter to us of great surprise, that, in their zeal for purifying religion, some of the reformers themselves should have fallen into the extreme of proscribing and discarding philosophy altogether. We ought to recollect, in their behalf, how, in course of time, terms come to change their import. Philosophy *then* was something very diverse from philosophy *now*. Since the domination of the Stagyrite was overthrown, and the mystic oracles of the schoolmen, the darkening commentators of Aristotle, were silenced; since Bacon introduced the true principles of scientific investigation: the name of philosophy has been retained, but the thing

* Mosheim, Vol. IV. p. 302.

designated by it has undergone an essential change.* Whether it be the philosophy of mind, or of matter, it now proceeds upon facts, as its only admissible data; and with existing facts it is impossible that divine revelation should ever be at variance. In the procedure of philosophers, there may not, on all accasions, be a duly consistent adherence to the inductive principle; but, however it may be departed from in practice, it is by all adopted in profession. He who would not be satisfied by the passing breath of inconsiderate applause, but would enjoy, among men of sense and reflection, solid and lasting reputation for true science, must neither spin out into theories the materials furnished by his own fancy, nor even, however ingeniously, frame structures of principles, and then set out in quest of facts to support them. To the lover of truth, even the most ingenious conjectures will be the suggestion of previously noticed or recorded facts; and he will immediately reject them, if they are unsupported by subsequent observations and experiments. It had been well if, in certain questions closely connected with the subject of these lectures, — questions relative especially to the present character of human nature, — there had been less of plausible and often (it must be admitted) beautiful theorizing, and a more rigid observance of the inductive principle. Revelation would have nothing to fear from such a process, but everything to hope. There would be found a correspondence between its statements and a larger induction of facts than can be brought to bear upon any other point whatever, in the whole range of natural and moral science; an induction, embracing a

* Notes and Illustrations. Note C.

wider field of experiment, extending through a longer period of time, and yielding a more invariably uniform result. I am aware, indeed, that the very principles of evil existing in human nature in its present state, prevent many from admitting the conclusion to which this induction leads, and which is in harmony with the representations of the sacred volume. I refer to the natural alienation of the heart of man from God, as constituting the essential element of his moral corruption. It has long been my painful conviction, that many of our theories of morals have been sadly vitiated, not merely in the way of defect, but even of radical and mischievous error, by the non-admission, or by the absence of all due consideration, of the real character of our nature, as estranged in in its affections from the government of God, and so in a state of moral depravity. I avow it to be one of my principal designs, to call to this subject the attention of my fellow Christians. However unsatisfactory may be my own brief consideration of it, I shall be happy if the principles that may be laid down shall be followed out more at large by some other and abler mind.

To say more at present, would necessarily be to anticipate the ground to be occupied in future lectures. The next in order will have for its object, the exposure of certain mistakes in pursuing our inquiries on the subject of morals; and especially, the attempt to deduce a scheme of virtue from the present character of human nature; and in it, and the one that shall succeed it, the principles laid down will be illustrated by brief comments on various moral systems.

LECTURE II.

ON MISTAKES IN THE METHOD OF PURSUING OUR INQUIRIES ON THE SUBJECT OF MORALS; AND ESPECIALLY ON THE ATTEMPT TO DEDUCE A SCHEME OF VIRTUE FROM THE PRESENT CHARACTER OF HUMAN NATURE.

1 TIM. VI. 20.

"Science falsely so called."

I SHALL enter at present into no inquiry what was the particular description of "science," or knowledge, which the Apostle meant to characterize by these words. Whatever it was, — whether the vaunted illumination of Jewish doctors, or the fanciful theories of Gentile philosophers, — all may be justly comprehended under the designation, that proceeds upon false principles, and by necessary consequence, conducts to false conclusions.

Importance of right principles.

In all science whatever, the entire value of it depends upon the adoption of *right principles;* and to no one of its departments does the remark more truly or forcibly apply, than to that of morals. Here, right principles are everything. There is nothing, in actions themselves, that can be called moral or immoral, considered abstractedly from the principles of the agent. A moral action is the action of a moral agent; and the moral character of the action depends on the state of the

agent's mind in the doing of it. An action may be contemplated in its merely *physical properties*, abstractedly from this altogether; and, along with its physical properties, the *consequences* too may be considered to which it gives rise. It is obvious, however, that neither the one nor the other of these constitutes at all its moral goodness or delinquency. As the action of a particular agent, the good or the evil of it must be sought in the mind from which it has proceeded, — in the motive or principle there, by which it has been suggested and influenced; — the amount of moral good or of moral evil in the action being neither more nor less than the amount of good or evil principle in exercise in the performance of it.

What is thus true of individual actions, or courses of conduct, may with equal truth be predicated of systems of morality. A system must be right or wrong, according as the principles on which it rests, or into which it ultimately resolves itself, are right or wrong. An error in these must affect the whole. All the diverging streams will have the taint of the fountain. The entire superstructure will correspond, in stability or in frailty, to the soundness or the erroneousness of the primary elements which constitute its foundation. And the present being a subject in which theory never can be purely and abstractly speculative, but must, to a greater or less degree, in as far as the minds of moral agents are concerned, affect the correctness of their feelings of responsibility, our inquiries into principles are not mere intellecual exercitations, with no other result than the gratification of a metaphysical curiosity; — they have a direct and important bearing on the characters of accountable beings, and

consequently on their ultimate and everlasting destinies. Under these impressions, we proceed to our subject.

Difference between the *principle or foundation*, and the *rule* or *standard* of virtue.

And I enter upon it with the statement of a distinction, which is a sufficiently obvious one but not on that account the less deserving of attention, — the distinction between the *principle* or *foundation* of moral virtue, and the *rule* or *standard* of its requirements. Without at present making any affirmation respecting either the one or the other, — without being so unreasonable as thus, at the very outset, to take aught for granted in answer to the questions, What *is* the principle? and What *is* the rule? I merely state the theoretical distinction. It is one which admits of a very simple and satisfactory illustration from what has place under human governments. A law appears in the statute-book, or the recorded enactments of a particular country, requiring or prohibiting some specified act. This law, then, is the rule, by which, in the matter whereto it relates, the conduct of the inhabitants of the country, and subjects of its government, must of course be regulated. We shall suppose the law a prohibitory one, — simply affixing a definite penalty to a definite deed, — without assigning any reason for the prohibition. But, although no reason appears on the statute-book, it does not follow that no reason existed in the minds of those legislators by whom the enactment was introduced. Here then we have the *rule*, and the *principle of the rule*. Whatever it was, by which the original framers of the law were induced to enact it, — that was the principle by which is here meant, the consideration on account or for the sake of which the law was enacted — or that which, in the minds of the enactors, constituted it right;

while the law itself, in its simple terms of prohibition, independently of the reason or principle of it, is the rule of conduct to the subject. In ten thousand cases, the subject may know nothing beyond the rule itself. He finds the law existing; and, without further inquiry, without troubling himself with any investigation of the principle, — with any attempt to discover the grounds of its original enactment, — he regulates his conduct accordingly. In some minds, however, there may preside a more inquisitive disposition. Though living, like other good subjects, in obedience to the law, they may not be satisfied with the mere knowledge of its existence. They may be desirous to trace it to its origin, — to ascertain its reason, — to find a satisfactory reply, not merely to the question, *What is the law?* but to the further question, *Why is the law what it is?* The answer to the first inquiry determines the rule, — the answer to the second the principle of the rule. The distinction is thus sufficiently intelligible, between the simple rule or standard of duty, and the reason why this rule or standard is what it is, and not something different or something opposite. I do not apply this distinction at present; but, having stated it, keep it in reserve for future use.

Grand defect in the structure of most theories of morals; the omission of man's depravity.

To show you, in part at least, my reason for enlarging, as I have done, on the hazard arising, in questions of morals, from the theories of human philosophy, I now come at once to the point which I have had principally in view, and to which I alluded in the close of the former lecture. It is this, — that in by much the larger proportion of these theories there is an entire, or almost entire, overlooking of

a fundamental article in the statements of fact and of doctrine contained in divine revelation, relative to the character and condition of man as a subject of God's moral government: — I refer to the *innate depravity of human nature.* It has long been my conviction, — a conviction which has been progressively confirmed by observation and reflection, — that a large proportion of theological errors, — of heretical departures from evangelical truth, — may be traced to mistaken or defective views of this great point. It is reasonable to expect that it should be so. The point is obviously and essentially fundamental; so that any material error respecting it cannot fail to affect the entire system of a man's opinions on divine subjects; and especially, in regard to that which it is the grand design of revelation to make known, — the scheme of the Redeemer's mediation. Of that scheme man is the object; and therefore our views of its nature, provisions, and ends, must of necessity be essentially modified by the conceptions we entertain of his actual character and condition. To these the scheme must of course be adapted; and an erroneous estimate of the disorder to be remedied will unavoidably produce a false conception of the remedy provided for it; — a light impression of the nature and extent of the apostacy, a correspondingly light impression of the means of restoration; and a denial of the one a consequent denial of the other. While these things are sufficiently evident as to the bearing of our views of human nature on our conceptions of the remedial part of the evangelical system, — the observation is, with equal truth, applicable to the speculations of philosophers on the principles and laws of moral obligation.

Let me not, however, be misunderstood. I am very far from intending to convey the sentiment, that the fallen and sinful state of human nature has produced any alteration whatever on the principles of obligation, and the essential elements of virtue. No sentiment could be more preposterous, or more pregnant with mischevious results. Whatever these principles were before man fell, they continued the same after he had fallen; and they now remain, and must remain forever, unaltered, and unalterable, — like the Divine Being himself, in whose nature we shall find them originating, "without variableness or shadow of turning." The harmony of man's nature with those principles, was what constituted its original rectitude; and in its contrariety to those principles consists its present depravity. So far from the principles having undergone any change, it is from their very permanence and immutability that this depravity continues to be ascertained and measured. Had there been a change in the standard, we should have had no means of determining the extent of the debasement; — had the weights and scales been altered, how could we have known how far the fallen creature, when "weighed in the balances," was "found wanting?" The obligations that lie upon man in his fallen state are the very same with those which lay upon him in his state of pristine innocence. His not fulfilling these obligations is his guilt. A change of character in any subject of the moral government of Deity can never occasion a change in the principles of that government. The law is neither annulled nor altered by the rebellion of the subject.

Mistake guarded against: — depravity does not alter obligation.

True bearing of the omission on moral theory *twofold*:— But, granting, and more than granting, — most decidedly maintaining all this, as important and undeniable truth, — a very few observations will suffice to show the connection of the fall and depravity of man with our present inquiry, and to make you sensible how essentially and extensively it must affect all the speculations of the creature who is the subject of it, on every question relating to the principles of moral rectitude. I argue at present hypothetically. I assume the fact of man's depravity, — of the natural and inveterate alienation of his heart from God. Now this state of his nature brings with it two distinct sources of error. Man, let it be remembered, is, in our present inquiry, both the *investigator*, and, in part at least, the *subject of investigation*. In each of these views of him, there is a source of error; the first arising from the influence of his depravity on his character as an investigator; and the second from the disposition to make his own nature, without adverting to its fallen state, his standard of moral principles, and his *study* in endeavoring to ascertain them.

First; influence of depravity on the character of the investigator. The first of these, on the assumption of depravity, must be very apparent. It arises from the bias which the moral state of the heart unavoidably imparts to the operations of the intellect on all such subjects: — a bias, which attaches uncertainty and inconclusiveness to all human inquiries and decisions concerning them. The mental powers of man are injuriously affected, on every point that relates to religion and virtue, by his moral alienation from God, the eternal prototype of all excellence. They are prone to aberration. His moral perceptions have lost their

original clearness. A corrupt tendency has been infused into all his speculations and reasonings; so that, on the topics referred to, his conclusions are not, without great caution, to be depended upon. How preposterous would it be, to commit the decision of an inquiry respecting the true principles of *moral rectitude* to a creature subject to all the blinding and perverting influences of the principles of *moral pravity*. Those philosophers, it is true, who deny the fact of human corruption, and hold in lofty disdain the abasing doctrine of the fall, are not at all sensible of any such perverting influence operating upon their judgments; and they accordingly pursue their speculations with the same freedom, and draw their conclusions, and frame their theories, with the same confident assurance, as in other departments of science. But their not suspecting it, their even scornfully disavowing it, cannot be allowed to disprove its reality. It may be one of its very operations. It is in the nature of the principles of depravity, to render the creatures who are the subjects of them insensible of their power. It exposes them to numberless modes of self-delusion; and especially in regard to what constitutes the essential element of depravity, — the "enmity against God," with which the heart of man is charged by his Maker. But, without at present entering on any proof of this point, — proceeding on the hypothetical assumption of it, it must be obvious to every reflecting mind, that, while the degrees in which it operates may be various, yet, on topics such as that which we are now discussing, there can be no certainty in the conclusions to which the subjects of this moral pravity may come: — no ground on which, with any assurance,

our minds can repose. It is a cause in which the judge is prepossessed, and his decisions not to be trusted.

Secondly; on the chief source of his moral estimates.

But this is not all. There is, as has been mentioned, a second source of error, of no less illusory influence, arising from the assumption by philosophers of human nature in its present state as a legitimate standard from which to take their estimate of moral principles. We find them, with very few exceptions, trying to discover these principles — the principles of rectitude — from an attentive examination and analysis of this same fallen nature. They take man as he is. They contemplate him as an intellectual and moral agent, of a certain rank and character in the scale of created existence; as possessing the nature, and holding the place, which the Supreme Will has assigned him. Thus, assuming him, as he now is, to be what his Creator made him and designed him to be, they pursue their investigations, and deduce their conclusions accordingly. They discover in man a variety of principles of action, which, according to their customary phraseology, "the Author of his being has implanted in his nature;" and from the existence of these principles they infer the intentions and the character of the Being by whom the constitution of his nature has been adjusted, and elicit their theories respecting the essential elements of moral rectitude. Now, this would be a procedure altogether satisfactory, were the creature who is the subject of the analytical process of investigation in the state in which it came from its Creator's hand; were it according to its appropriate nature, perfect, and so a fair specimen of the moral productions of Deity; — or, as it has been briefly

and happily enough expressed "if in man that which *is* were the same with that which *ought to be*."* But if the human nature be indeed in the condition in which revelation affirms it to be, — if it be a nature in a state of estrangement from God, and of moral corruption, it is needless to say how delusive all this necessarily becomes. How can anything but error and confusion, or, at best, mingled and partial truth, be the result of an attempt to discover the principles of moral rectitude from the constitution of a depraved nature? — to extract a pure system of Ethics from the elements of corruption? — to found the superstructure of moral science on the scattered and unstable rubbish of fallen humanity?

Let me illustrate my meaning by a simple comparison. Suppose a chemist were desirous to ascertain the ingredients of water. What estimate should we form of his judgment, if, with this view, he were to subject to his analysis a quantity of what had just passed, in the bed of a sluggish river, through the midst of a large manufacturing city, from whose common sewers, and other outlets of impurity, it had received every possible contamination which, either by simple admixture or by chemical affinity, had become incorporated with the virgin purity of the fountain; and if, proceeding on such analysis, he were to publish to the world his *thesis* on the composition of water? Little less preposterous must be the conduct of those philosophers, who derive their ideas of what constitutes rectitude in morals from human nature *as it is*. They analyse the water of the polluted river; and refuse the guide that would conduct them to the mountain spring of its native purity.

* Dr. Payne.

It may perhaps be alleged, that the comparison is not fair: that these philosophers should rather be likened to the chemist, who, in analysing the water of the river, takes care to separate all such ingredients as are merely adventitious, and so to arrive at the true nature and composition of (I use the term of course in its popular acceptation) the pure element. Should this be alleged, I answer, that such a comparison will be found to involve a manifest *petitio principii*. The chemist who proceeds thus, must of course, have a *previous knowledge* of the composition of water; else of the various ingredients, found by him in the portion taken from the river, how could he possibly be aware which were adventitious, and which belonged to its primitive nature? According to the comparison, therefore, as thus stated, the philosopher, with whom the chemist is compared, must, in like manner, be in possession of a previous knowledge of the elementary principles of rectitude; from which, in his process of moral analysis, he refines away all the foreign and adventitious corruptions which, in the nature of man, have mingled with and debased them: — that is, he must be *already in possession of the very knowledge of which he is supposed to be in quest.* This will not do. To render the comparison legitimate, we must, in both cases, suppose a state of previous ignorance, and a process of investigation instituted with the view of obtaining correct information. In both, the source from which the information is sought is fallacious; and in both, therefore, the conclusions are unavoidably uncertain or wrong.

Exemplifications of the omission in question.] In the brief remarks which it is my purpose to offer on some of the principal theories of morals, the influence of the source of error I

have now adverted to may be made sufficiently apparent; yet it may not be amiss to present you with an exemplification or two of what I mean when I speak of philosophers taking human nature, according to its present phenomena, as a standard of their moral estimates, in their speculations on the principles of rectitude. I give the following, not according to any principle of selection, but as the first that have recently presented themselves, and only as a specimen of much to the same purpose, to be found in almost all the writers on moral science. Others will occur in our comments on different systems, which, to avoid repetition, I do not introduce here.

The writer of the article MORAL PHILOSOPHY, in the Encyclopædia Britannica, gives the following statement of the specific nature of the science; and I quote it, because it presents a clear view of the fallacious principle of which I have been speaking: "Moral philosophy has this in common with natural philosophy, that it appeals to nature, or to fact; depends on observation; and builds its reasonings on plain, uncontroverted experiments, or upon the fullest induction of particulars of which the subject will admit. We must observe, in both these sciences, how nature is affected, and what her conduct is in such and such circumstances; or, in other words, we must collect the appearances of nature in any given instance, trace them to some given principles or terms of operation, and then apply these principles or laws to the explaining of other phenomena. Therefore, moral philosophy inquires, not how man might have been, but how he is, constituted; not into what principles and dispositions his actions may be artfully resolved, but from what principles and dispositions they actually flow; not what he may, by education, habit, or foreign influence, come to

be, or to do, but what by his nature, or original constituent principles, he is formed to be and to do. We discover the office, use, or distinction, of any work, whether natural or artificial, by observing its structure, the parts of which it consists, their connection, or joint action. It is thus we understand the office and use of a watch, a plant, an eye, or a hand. It is the same with a living creature of the rational or brute kind. Therefore, to determine the office, duty, or distinction of man; or, in other words, what his business is, or what conduct he is obliged to pursue, we must inspect his constitution, take every part to pieces, examine their mutual relations one to the other, and the common effect or tendency of the whole."

According to this statement, we are to pursue our investigations in morals, as we do our researches in physics; regarding the present moral constitution of man, indicated by its various phenomena, as being, in all respects, the work of Deity, as really as the structure of his corporeal frame, or that of any creature, animate or inanimate, in the physical world; so that, from the observation of man as he is, we are to learn the moral character of Deity, and the principles of rectitude as existing in his nature and approved under his government, in the same way in which we discover his intelligence and wisdom from the marks of skill in the material universe. This, of course, proceeds on the assumption, that man, as he now is, is what he was originally made, and was designed by his Maker to continue to be. This writer says, and says truly, when speaking of the differences of opinion subsisting with regard to the criterion or test of virtue, and the principle or motive of it; "One cause of this difference respecting matters of such universal importance, may, perhaps, be traced to the mistakes into which philos-

ophers are apt to fall concerning the original state of man." In saying this, he refers to the opinion held by some, (an opinion as contrary to reason as to Scripture, and falling into merited disrepute,) that the original state of man was a state of ignorant savagism. But, whatever differences of opinion may have arisen from this cause, the differences have been both greater and more numerous, which have been occasioned by the overlooking of "the original state of man" in a higher sense, when he sustained the moral image of his Creator, — light of light, — the holy creature of a holy God; and of the degeneracy of his nature, as it now presents itself in his state of apostasy.

The late Dugald Stewart quotes, with high approbation, the following sentiment of Melancthon, where, to use the language of the philosopher, that reformer "combats the pernicious and impious tenets of those theologians who maintained, that moral distinctions are created entirely by the arbitrary revealed will of God;" — "Wherefore, our decision is this: that those precepts which learned men have committed to writing, transcribing them from the common sense and common feelings of human nature, are to be accounted as not less divine than those contained in the tables given to Moses; and that it could not be the intention of our Maker to supersede, by a law graven on a stone, that which is graven with his own finger on the table of the heart." — "This language," says the commentator, "was, undoubtedly, an important step towards a just system of moral philosophy. But still, like the other steps of the reformers, it was only a return to common sense, and to the genuine spirit of Christianity, from the dogmas imposed on the credulity of mankind by an ambitious priesthood. Many years

were yet to elapse, before any attempts were to be made to trace, with analytical accuracy, the moral phenomena of human nature to their first principles in the constitution and condition of man; or even to disentangle the plain and practical lessons of Ethics, from the speculative and controverted articles of theological systems." *

Assuming the fairness of the citation from Melancthon, the sentiment expressed in it seems to me to involve an unaccountable oversight, — and, in some degree at least, a falling in with the grand error of philosophical writers on Ethics. In allowing *equal authority* to the deductions of "learned men," from "the common sense and common feelings of human nature," with that ascribed to the ten commandments, the moral law as given by Moses, the good reformer had surely forgotten the depravity of that nature, the dictates of whose "common sense and common feelings" are thus identified, in certainty and obligation, with the direct announcements of the will of Deity; and had forgotten also the bias produced by this depravity in the minds of those very "learned men," by whom the deductions are drawn, and the theories framed. Granting, to no small extent, the correctness and authority of the dictates of conscience; still, as the conscience of a fallen creature, it is liable to be warped and deflected from rectitude in its decisions, and must not, therefore, have absolutely implicit reliance. So far from its being the design of Jehovah to "supersede by a law graven on stones that which is graven with his own finger on the table of the heart;" it is obvious that, had the law continued "written on the heart," in the

* Prelim. Diss. to Suppl. to Encycl. Brit. pp. 30, 31.

same sense, and to the same extent, as at first, there would never have been any occasion for the proclamation of it from Sinai, and the graving of it, for permanent appeal, on the tables of stone. We may have occasion to resort to this topic somewhat more at large, when, in a future Lecture, we shall have to speak of the Apostle Paul's representation of the condition of the heathen.

Meantime we observe, that when Mr. Stewart speaks of the language of Melancthon as "an important step towards a just system of moral philosophy," and of "tracing with analytical accuracy the moral phenomena of human nature to their first principles, in the constitution and condition of man," he proceeds on the common assumption, that the "constitution and condition of man," — that is, of man as he now is, — afford a just criterion, and the only one accessible by us, of right and wrong; and that the "first principles of the moral phenomena of human life" are there to be sought, with the view of thence ascertaining a correct system of morals.

To a certain extent, I have admitted, there is truth in the representations thus made by philosophers. Reason and conscience are not obliterated, but do certainly continue to bear testimony for God. What we plead for is, that in a depraved nature, subject to all the manifold biases of corruption, they cannot be trusted to as affording any *certain standard* either of truth or duty, — any infallible indication of the mind and will of Deity. The creature that has lost the moral image of God, cannot, in his moral constitution, present a fair exhibition either of what God is, or of what God wills, or afford any correct index to the principles of moral rectitude. Were the philosophers who write thus making any reference to the present state of our nature as being different from what it

was originally, we should then understand their meaning with the qualifications which the recognition of such difference implies. But their appeals to the constitution of our nature for the principles of morals, are not only unaccompanied with any such admission, but contain either the implication, or the express avowal, of the contrary.

It is of human nature in its present state, and according to its present phenomena, that the late Dr. Brown (of whose theory of morals more particular notice will be taken hereafter) shortly but emphatically says, when speaking of the universal accordance of the moral sentiment among mankind: — "Since the world was created, there have indeed been myriads of human beings on the earth; but there has been only one God, and there is only one God. There is therefore only one great voice of moral pprobation among mankind; because He, *the great Approver, and the great Former of our moral constitution, is one.*" * — This is, in few words, the essence of the vitiating error of so many philosophical systems: that our present "moral constitution," — our moral constitution as we now find it, — was "formed" by Him who is "the great Approver" of virtue, — and so indicate his character, and is a standard of the principles which he approves. — I refrain from saying more, till we come to the brief consideration of Dr. Brown's theory.

Several other references I had marked, more and less explicit; but I think it unnecessary to multiply quotations in support of what will hardly be questioned, and what, moreover, will more fully appear immediately. — The subject is deeply interesting; and the illustration of

* Lect. LXXXI.

it might be pursued to an indefinite extent. What I have now to offer is crude and imperfect; and I wish it to be regarded rather as hints which may be amplified by others, than as anything approaching to a full discussion. — I am well aware, how exceedingly unpalatable the principle is, on which I am now proceeding; and with what indignation philosophers would frown it down, as not merely involving what will by them be regarded as a slander upon the object of their almost idolatrous veneration, human nature, but as laying an arbitrary interdict on the freedom of speculation, and wrapping in uncertainty all the results, on such subjects, of philosophical research. — I cannot help it. The question is not what is palatable, but what is true. And the offence itself which is taken by a jealous and sensitive pride, at the very suggestion of any existing incompetency from a cause so humbling, only furnishes an additional evidence that the cause exists.

Application of the objection to various theories.

In the cursory observations which I am about to make on some of the principal theories of morals, my chief object is, to show the bearing upon each of them of the great general objection which I have now been introducing to your notice. An occasional remark on their respective merits in other points of view, may at the same time be tolerated, to prevent repetition afterwards. — I intend no more than a mere glance at the several theories; with the exception of one; into which, as the system of a philosophical Divine of the very highest and most merited eminence, I may enter a little more at large.

1. The Aristotelian or Peripatetic system.

When the ARISTOTELIAN philosophy described virtue as consisting in *the mean between two extremes;* I need hardly say, it laid

down a position singularly vague, — a position which, in terms of apparent definiteness, actually defined nothing. It was, indeed, susceptible of some useful application to particular departments of conduct, in which we are accustomed still to admonish against extremes. But even in such cases, it is destitute of all precision: and in many others it is incapable of being applied, without the hazard of introducing a mischievous laxity of moral principle; since there are not a few of the virtues, respecting which the very attempt to fix a medium between them and their opposite vices would be an approach at least to self-contradiction, — there being, in such cases, not a mere difference of degrees, but a distinction and opposition of principles. The drawing of a middle line would then be attended with consequences the most pernicious; because it would only be such an approximating of virtue to vice and of vice to virtue, as, instead of precisely defining either, would only serve to confound both. Thus the definition is more indefinite than the thing to be defined; in some cases having no application at all, and even in those to which it can be applied, ascertaining nothing.*

* Sir James Mackintosh places the Peripatetic definition of virtue in the fairest and most favorable light — but still not in a light which at all alleviates the obvious difficulties referred to in the text, when he says, "The celebrated doctrine of the Peripatetics, which placed all virtues in a medium between opposite vices, was probably suggested by the Platonic representation of its necessity to keep up harmony between the different parts of our nature. The perfection of a compound machine is attained, where all its parts have the fullest scope for action. Where one is so far exerted as to repress others, there is a vice of excess. When any one has less activity than it might exert without disturbing others, there is a vice of defect. The point which all reach without collision against each other, is the mediocrity in which the Peripatetics placed virtue." — *Prelim. Diss. to Suppl. to Encycl. Brit.* Sect. II.

Even on the supposition, moreover, that the terms conveyed a principle in itself correct, and capable of universal application, the inquiry still remains — What are the extremes on either hand? It being sufficiently obvious, that, unless these can be previously fixed, there is no possibility of determining the medium between them; no more than there is of drawing a central line between two geometrical parallels, without having first drawn these parallels themselves. There remains, besides, another inquiry, more immediately connected with our present subject, and affecting the principle of the case. Supposing the extremes defined, even with the utmost precision, and the middle line consequently traced out and marked, *why* are these to be regarded as extremes? and *why* is the middle line the line of rectitude? *On what account* is it, that the line on the one side and on the other is wrong, and the line in the middle alone right? Without some pertinent answer to such questions, there is no *principle* ascertained; for it is obvious, that, if we would keep the theory distinct from others, we must not introduce, for the fixing of the middle, anything of the nature of *moral sense*, or *intuitive intellection*, or *approving emotion*,* which would at once render the definition of virtue unmeaning, and confound it with the principles of theories essentially different.

But, — to come to the precise point which it is my present object more especially to impress, — not only does the difficulty meet us, of fixing the extreme and middle lines, and the further difficulty of determining *why* the middle line is right and the extremes wrong; — we have further to ask, What is the character of that nature, to

* The principles, respectively, of the theories of Hutcheson, Cudworth, and Brown.

which is committed the province of determining all these perplexing points, — of ascertaining and marking off extremes and middle lines, and settling legitimate principles? Assuming, as we now do, the Bible account of that nature, we regard it as a nature of which the elements are unhappily jumbled and confounded; which is "turned upside down," governors and subjects having changed places, the appetites and passions having usurped the sovereignty, and brought the intellect under their restless domination; in which that is undermost which ought to be uppermost. Even on the supposition, therefore, that the theory were in the correctest harmony with abstract truth, how is a nature of which this is the character, — which, in its judgments on all such matters, is subject to so large a number and so endless a variety of perverting influences, — which is itself averse to the supposed middle line of rectitude, and fond of the extremes on either hand of it, — how is such a nature, or the creature that inherits it to adjust points of so much delicacy, as the precise limits at which these various bounding and intermediate lines are to be drawn? Itself in a state of actual aberration from the right line, and without any sincere desire to find or to keep it, how are we to trust to its decisions and its guidance? How are we, with any confidence whatever, to shape our course, in the voyage of life, by any chart which it can lay down? How preposterous the idea of leaving to a nature of which the character is summed up in "enmity against God," the delicate office of settling those extremes, between which, in the precise middle line, also requiring to be drawn with precision, lies the true path of moral rectitude!

2. The Stoical system, or system of Zeno.

According to the STOICAL system, — the system of the school of Zeno, — virtue, or moral rectitude, consisted in *living according to na-*

ture. But of this definition, the terms were by some understood in a more enlarged, and by others in a more limited acceptation; the former interpreting them as meaning according to the *nature of things* in general, while the latter restricted them to the *nature of man.* The general doctrine was, that conformity to nature is the first object of pursuit; that every one who has a right discernment of what is good will be chiefly concerned to conform to nature in all his actions and pursuits; and this they regarded as the origin of moral obligation. From the peculiar metaphysical notions of the sect of Zeno, respecting the existence of only one substance in the universe, partly active and partly passive, and from their giving to the former the appellation of Deity, their theory of living according to nature has been identified by some moderns with the system of those who resolve virtue into conformity to the will of God; and Warburton, indeed, has compared the three principal schools of antiquity, the followers of *Plato*, of *Aristotle*, and of *Zeno*, respectively, to the patrons in more modern times, of the *moral sense*, of the *essential differences*, and of *arbitrary will.* Yet, in the leading principle of the doctrine of the Stoics, that virtue consists in "living according to nature," there appears to be quite as great analogy to the *second* of these three schemes, that of essential differences, or eternal fitnesses, as there is to the last.

But at all events, in ascertaining what is meant by conformity to nature, it is obvious that the character and constitution of the nature of man must be especially regarded, as among the indications either of the divine will, or of what is essentially fit. Now, in the system which contains the definition, it is surely needless to say, the doctrine of man's innate depravity, as a creature fallen

from the state in which he was created, had no place. The assumption, on the contrary, was, that human nature is now in the state in which it was originally, and in which the gods, or the active principle of the universe, or an unmeaning Destiny, designed and appointed it to be. If we are to take the definition, then, in this view of it, — as signifying conformity to nature in the present constitution of man, — we may well sigh over the result. Alas! for virtue. If man be a fallen and depraved being, a being from whose heart the very first principle and most essential element of all true goodness is wanting, — I mean the love of God, — then what are we to make of living according to nature, as a definition of moral rectitude? Instead of a definition of virtue, it becomes a definition of vice. The nature being itself evil, to live according to it, (even with all the restraining and corrective power of a conscience, which remains indeed, but which participates in the corruption,) cannot be good. To live according to nature, if nature is understood of the fallen nature of man, is, in truth, to live most *unnaturally;* what we are accustomed to call the natural state of man being the most unnatural in which it is possible for an intelligent creature to be: unnatural, that is, according to every conception the mind can form to itself of the natural fitnesses of things, especially in regard to the relation of the creature to the Creator.

The definition would have suited man well, when he came, all upright and pure, from his Maker's hand, — a specimen of his moral excellence, as well as of his power and his wisdom, — a scintillation of the light of the Godhead. But if, I repeat, human nature be what the Scriptures represent it to be, — a representation in harmony with universal fact, — then, what kind of definition is it

of virtue, that it consists in living according to a nature which, in its radical principles and innate tendencies, is in a state of opposition to virtue; to virtue in its essential elementary principle — the love of God?

We may have occasion to revert to the leading features of this system, when we come to consider that of Bishop Butler; which is essentially the doctrine of the school of Zeno, modified by the knowledge of divine revelation, and professedly argued on Christian principles.

If, in the Stoical definition, *nature* be understood *more generally;* it will then be found to express a standard of rectitude, which, while it may be nearer than the other to truth, is yet greatly more recondite and remote from apprehension. When so understood, however, it corresponds so very nearly with another system, which shall be noticed by and by, that I need not now insist upon it; I mean that which resolves virtue into an agreement with the *eternal fitnesses of things;* the system of Cudworth, Clarke, and Price.

I shall pass over, as undeserving of a moment's notice, the theory of ARISTIPPUS, DEMOCRITUS, and others of the CYRENIAN and ATOMICAL schools. It corresponds very much to the HOBBISM of more modern times; regarding virtue and vice as mere arbitrary distinctions, depending on the will of the magistrate and the authority of human enactments; so that, according as these vary, what is virtue in one country may be vice in another, and what is vice to-day may be virtue to-morrow.

3. Epicurean system.

Of the system of EPICURUS very different representations have been given, according as it has been viewed in its original statements, or as it was subsequently corrupted into a scheme of mere animal

pleasure and unrestrained sensuality.* We shall take it in its "best estate." According to it, then, we are to regard *happiness* as the great end of our being; and this happiness consists in living as free as possible from the evils incident to life, and in the enjoyment of as large a measure as possible of its goods. The only things to be regarded, as in themselves good or evil, are pleasure and pain; and of all else that is called good or evil, these,

* President Edwards speaks of Epicurus as "that father of atheism and licentiousness," and of his followers, as "the very worst of the heathen philosophers." — *Inquiry into the Freedom of the Will*," Part IV. Sect. 6. This is sufficiently severe. "The moral character of Epicurus," says Sir James Mackintosh, "was excellent: no man more enjoyed the pleasures, or better performed the duties of friendship. The letter of his system was no more indulgent to vice than that of any other moralist. 'All the other virtues,' said Epicurus, 'grow from prudence; which teaches that we cannot live pleasurably without living justly and virtuously, nor live justly and virtuously without living pleasurably.' The illustration of this sentence formed the whole moral discipline of Epicurus." — *Prelim. Diss.* Sect. 2. Perhaps these two seemingly opposite estimates both of the philosopher and his system, may be brought towards harmony by what Sir James says further: "Although, therefore, Epicurus having more strongly inculcated the connection of virtue with happiness, perhaps by the faulty excess of treating it as an exclusive principle; yet his doctrine was justly charged with indisposing the mind to those exalted and generous sentiments, without which no pure, elevated, bold, generous, or tender virtues can exist." — *Ibid.* In support of this representation, he refers to Cicero, — "Nil generosum, nil magnificum sapit." Assuredly a system justly chargeable with such defects, which was incompatible with the existence, in the character formed by it, of purity, elevation, magnanimity, generosity, and tenderness, might justify terms of no very qualified censure. And when to this statement is superadded its virtual atheism, we shall not wonder at any amount of evil resulting from it.

therefore, are constituted the legitimate measures: — in regard to all objects of desire or of aversion, the sole reason why the one is pursued and the other avoided, being, that the one is fitted to procure pleasure, the other to occasion pain; and the degree of the anticipated pleasure or pain regulating the degree of the eagerness with which the one is sought, and of the solicitude with which the other is shunned.

The great principle of the system, as a system of Ethics, delivered by the philosopher himself, and taken in its most favorable light, was, "That a steady course of virtue produces the greatest quantum of pleasure and happiness of which human nature is capable." Prudence, temperance, sobriety, fortitude, gentleness, justice, all contribute, in their respective kinds, to make up this quantum of happiness; and their tendency to its production is what constitutes them virtuous, and determines their title to moral approbation. The system acknowledged nothing of the *honestum*, of which the rectitude, and the approbation of it in our minds, were independent of its consequences to ourselves, whether painful or pleasant.*

It is not difficult to perceive, how liable this system was to perversion and abuse, by the affixing of a sensual acceptation to those terms which were used in it to express the idea of happiness. And we shall wonder the less that such abuse should have taken place, when it is considered how very limited and inadequate was the import of those terms, even as employed by its founder.

* "Honestum, igitur, id intelligimus, quod tale est, ut, detracta omni, sine ullis præmiis fructibusve, per se ipsum jure laudari." — *Cicero.*

The system of Epicurus, moreover, was a modification of atheism. Everything of the nature of providence, or the superintendence of Deity over human affairs, being denied, there was, of course, no higher principle brought into exercise, than a mere consideration of present results. Happiness meant merely the enjoyment of present pleasure, and the absence of present pain; and, instead of comprehending, in the estimate of it, the whole of our immortal being, it was confined to the brief period of man's earthly life. — It was thus, in fact, the system of *utility*, as the standard of virtue, in its lowest grade.

According to this system, — (and the observation applies, in a greater or less degree, to every system that founds morals in utility) — there is nothing in virtue that renders it virtue, beyond its experienced conduciveness to human enjoyment. Instead of virtue being something independently and in its own nature good, from which effects result in correspondence with its nature, its goodness is sought exclusively in the effects themselves; these alone being what constitutes any action virtuous, or the contrary: — so that we are furnished by it with the anomalous and circular statement, that "a steady course of virtue produces the greatest quantum of happiness," as if the virtue were something in itself good, independently of the happiness produced by it; while yet, in the theory, its conduciveness to the production of happiness is that which alone constitutes it virtue; happiness being the sole end, and there being nothing previous, or superior, from which the nature of virtue originates.

All systems by which virtue is founded in utility, even when the term is taken in its most comprehensive acceptation, are liable to the grand objection we are now especially considering, — namely, that, although the princi-

ple of them were ever so correct, it is a principle of which a fallen nature is utterly incompetent to make the application. We might go further, and say, that the task of determining *the useful*, in its legitimate extent of meaning, is beyond the limited powers of any creature. — But at present, instead of insisting upon this, (as it will more than once come before us hereafter,) I would rather hold up the Epicurean system, even in its most undebased form, as a sad exemplification of the tendency of human nature to a low and unworthy estimate of that happiness which the system regards as the end and the standard of moral rectitude; — and as thus affording a practical confirmation of the validity of the objection.

For a just decision in a case of such momentous interest, how are we to trust to a nature, which, in this instance, bounds its ideas of the happiness of a creature like man by what contributes to the pleasure of his little span of life on earth; and which, moreover, by excluding Deity from the government of the world, at once sets aside the first and highest of the elementary *principles* of goodness in the heart of the creature, a due regard to God, — and the greatest by infinite degrees, of the *ends* which utility ought ever to be considered as embracing, — the glory of the infinite Creator! I do not *now*, therefore, contend against this system, on the ground that utility cannot be the foundation of virtue, but rather as affording proof that human nature cannot be the judge of utility. We see in it one of the results (and it does not stand alone) of leaving the decision of such a point with such a judge. Even were utility admitted to be the foundation and standard of virtue, still what is included in utility must be determined by a different authority, — by a mind, not only free of all the biasing influences of

moral corruption, but above all the necessary limitations of created being, and capable of comprehending both the vastness of the universe and the infinitude of the Godhead.

We shall pursue the application of the same principle to other systems, in our next Lecture.

LECTURE III.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

1 TIM. VI. 20.

"Science falsely so called."

THE same general principle of objection, which, in the close of last Lecture, was applied to the moral systems of the Aristotelian, the Stoical, and the Epicurean schools, — that, namely, derived from the present fallen state of human nature, as both rendering that nature a deceitful standard of moral goodness, and the possessor of it a corrupt and prejudiced judge, — we now proceed to consider in its application to certain other systems of more modern origin, though some of them bearing resemblance, in their leading principles, to one or other of the systems of antiquity.

4. System of Cudworth, Clarke, and Price.

I begin with the system which resolves virtue into agreement with THE ETERNAL FITNESSES OF THINGS. — To enter at large into illustration of the principles of this system, as introduced by CUDWORTH, and ably taken up and defended by CLARKE and PRICE, would be foreign to my present purpose. It is only necessary to state them so far as to make the bearing of my general objection manifest. According to it, then, the right and wrong of actions are to be regarded as

ranking amongst necessary or first truths, which are discerned by the mind, independently of all reasoning or evidence; so that the perception of right or wrong, along with the consequent sentiment of approbation or disapprobation, is as unavoidable as the perception of the truth or falsehood of self-evident propositions, — propositions which are never obscured more than by attempts to prove them, and which we believe, simply because we cannot but believe them. The system maintains an absolute and eternal distinction between right and wrong, — a distinction which the mind intuitively discerns; the right consisting in correspondence, and the wrong in contrariety, to the eternal fitnesses of things.*

I am far from intending to deny that this phraseology, about fitnesses, and eternal fitnesses, has any meaning. I believe it to have a meaning, and an important meaning too. I have no hesitation in admitting, that there do exist such fitnesses as the definition assumes, and that virtue may with propriety be regarded as consisting in conformity with these fitnesses: whence this is to be considered as arising, we may hereafter see. Suppose, then, we grant that the *moral fitness* of the action of an intelligent agent lies in its congruity with the true nature, circumstances, and relations of things; a general idea may be given of this congruity, and consequently of the moral fitness of which it is the assumed standard, from that relation which is obviously the first and highest of all that are possible — the relation, namely, in which such a creature stands to the Author of his existence. There cannot surely be any hesitation in assenting to the proposition, that in moral science, the unfitness of profanity in

*Notes and Illustrations. Note D.

the speech or conduct, or of irreverence or hatred in the mind of such a creature towards Deity, is as real and as palpable as, in the science of physics, would be the unfitness of a cube to fill up a spherical case.* However inconsistent with this maxim may be the behavior of mankind in general, — behavior indicative of that estrangement of affection from God which is the essence of their depravity, — yet we cannot imagine a man in the possession of a sound mind, and understanding the terms of the proposition, who will withhold from it the assent of his judgment. If hesitation ever appears in avowing such assent, it must be the hesitation which a man naturally feels who is reluctant to condemn himself. Who ever met with a profane man, who would, on principle, vindicate his blasphemies?

But although a few such general maxims, — such great fundamental principles, — may be admitted to be, with all propriety, classed among first truths, and held as correct exemplifications of the *fitness of things*; — yet even of a sinless creature, if we suppose him left entirely to his own unassisted conceptions, how very limited must be the comprehension of what may be embraced in such a phrase! It is a phrase easily uttered, and it expresses what has not merely theoretical but real existence; but it is a phrase of vast amount of meaning, comprehending views so enlarged and complicated, as to be utterly beyond the grasp and the distinct apprehension of a finite intellect. The line of created wisdom is too short to sound their depths. There is one line alone that can reach, — one intellect alone that can search them. They are views, which can be embraced in all their am-

* Notes and Illustrations. Note. E.

plitude, — fathomed in all their profoundness, — traced out in all their ramifications, only by that Mind, which planned and framed the universe, and by which all its endless relations were originally adjusted, — the relations of creatures to fellow creatures, and of all creatures to himself; this last being necessarily the first in order, the highest in obligation, and the foundation of all the rest.

Here, then, comes in, in all its force of application, our master difficulty. If such things are true of a finite nature, even though sinless, — how is a nature that is not only thus limited, but in which the propor order of things has been disturbed and inverted, — in which, especially, the claims of the first and most sacred of all relations have lost their hold, and are disregarded and trampled under foot, — how is such a nature, with any semblance of reason, to be constituted judge of the universal and eternal moral fitnesses of things? It should not be forgotten, that the learned framers of the system now under our notice, had the benefit, in putting it together, of the light of revelation. Hence the superiority of their illustrations and defences of its principles to anything of a similar character broached among the philosophers of antiquity. But, even as maintained by these Christian philosophers, the system does not contain that distinct and full recognition of the real state of human nature, for which I am at present pleading, as essential to a correct judgment on all such subjects.

It is surely very manifest, that unless there be a just apprehension of the true character and condition of man, there cannot fail to be a corresponding misconception and error in the estimate of those *fitnesses*, in conformity to which virtue, or moral rectitude, is supposed to consist. If the human nature, as it now is, is conceived to be in

its pristine and proper state, even as the Sovereign Creator made and meant it to be, and if the estimate of those fitnesses is made out on this mistaken hypothesis; it is not difficult to perceive, how materially the true relation of man to God, and of God to man, may be misunderstood, and what an amount of error may, by such misunderstanding, be introduced into the conclusions of which it becomes the ground. In order to a right estimate of fitnesses, there must of necessity be a right conception of the relations between which they subsist. I have formerly admitted, that the fall and subsequent sinfulness of man have made no change on his original moral obligations; but of these obligations themselves our ideas cannot but be materially affected by ignorance of his true condition, and of the difference between what his nature was at first, and what it has now become. For, if it be from our conception of the fitnesses involved in the relation reciprocally subsisting between man and God, that our estimate of these obligations is formed; — then, if the conception of those fitnesses proceeds upon a view of this relation as it now exists, which is either entirely, or to any considerable degree, erroneous, who does not perceive to what confusion, to what total misapprehension, or at least to what incongruous blending of truth and falsehood, this must necessarily lead? Here, then, we have the double source of error formerly adverted to, — the incompetency of the judge, and the incorrectness of the standard.*

* I have taken no notice in the text of the system of Wollaston, according to which virtue consists in conformity to *truth*, or to the *truth of things*; — partly because it was not my purpose to introduce all the different theories which philosophers have broached,

5. System of Dr. Adam Smith.

Under the same condemnation, in a heavier measure, must be laid the "THEORY OF MORAL SENTIMENTS," by the justly celebrated ADAM SMITH.

The work in which this theory is unfolded has been eulogized as, "in its minor details and illustrations, pre-

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and partly because it bears so close a correspondence to that of Cudworth; the *fitness of things* and the *truth of things*, conveying ideas, as far as we can understand the phrases, so analogous, that the same objections which are valid against the one system will be of equal force against the other. The near resemblance of the two may appear from the following language of Jonathan Edwards in regard to Wollaston. After having remarked that "most of the duties incumbent upon us, if well considered, will be found to partake of the nature of justice; that there is some natural agreement of one thing to another; some adaptedness of the agent to the object; some answerableness of the act to the occasion; some equality and proportion in things of a similar nature, and of a direct relation one to another," &c. — (language quite appropriate to the *fitness of things*) — he proceeds to observe: — "It is this secondary kind of beauty which belongs to the virtues and duties that are required of us, that Mr. Wollaston had in his eye, when he resolved all virtue into an agreement of inclinations, volitions, and actions, with *truth*. He evidently has respect to the *justice* there is in the virtues and duties that are proper to be in one being, towards another; which consists in one being's expressing such affections, and using such a conduct, towards another, as hath *a natural agreement and proportion* to what is in them, and what we receive from them: which is as much a natural conformity of affection and action with its ground, object, and occasion, as that which is between a true proposition and the thing spoken of in it." — (*Diss. on the Nature of true Virtue*, Chap. iii.) I do not now consider the terms used by Edwards as they relate to his own system, which will come to be discussed hereafter. I quote the passage, as aptly illustrative of the approximation to each other (so as almost to identify an import) of *fitnesses* in Clarke's system and *truth* in Wollaston's. — Similar observations might, perhaps, be made with regard to Malebranche's *love of order* as the principle of virtue, and *conformity to universal order* as what constitutes moral rectitude.

senting a model of philosophic beauty, of which all must acknowledge the power, who are not disqualified by their very nature for the admiration and enjoyment of intellectual excellence; so dull of understanding as to shrink, with a painful consciousness of incapacity, at the very appearance of refined analysis; or so dull and cold of heart, as to feel no charm in the delightful varieties of an eloquence, that, in the illustration and embellishment of the noblest truths, seems itself to live and harmonize with those noble sentiments which it adorns."* This is high praise; but it is the praise of one who himself rejects the theory; pronouncing it, in its leading doctrine, "as manifestly false, as the greater number of its secondary and minute delineations are faithful to the fine lights, and faint and flying shades, of that moral nature which they represent:" — a nature which thus, without any acknowledgment of its fallen state, comes in for its share of the eulogy bestowed on its philosophic delineator. It is with the principles of the theory alone that we have at present to do. And we may safely say, that, but for the well-earned celebrity of the name attached to it, it would hardly have been deemed deserving of serious regard. It is the product of an ingenious, refined, and vigorous intellect, in quest of something original on a tritical subject; but it has, justly, I think, been designated "fantastical,"† and may, not inaptly, perhaps, be characterized as the *enthusiasm* of moral science.

According to this theory, we judge of the actions of others by a *direct*, and of our own by a *reflex sympathy*. If we are conscious of a full sympathy with the emotions of the agent in performing an action, we pronounce the

* Dr. Brown. † Dr. Payne.

action right; if of a similar sympathy with the gratitude of the object of the action, we pronounce the *agent meritorious;* — our estimate of the moral rectitude of the action depending on our sympathy with the agent, — and our estimate of the merits of the agent, on our sympathy with the object of his action. Then, with regard to our own conduct, "we in some measure reverse this process; or rather, by a process still more refined, we imagine others sympathizing with us, and we sympathize with their sympathy. We consider how our conduct would appear to an impartial spectator. We approve of it, if it be that of which we feel he would approve; we disapprove of it, if it be that which we feel, by the experience of our own former emotions, when we have ourselves, in similar circumstances, estimated the actions of others, would excite his disapprobation. We are able to form a judgment of our own conduct, therefore, because we have previously judged of the moral conduct of others, that is to say, have previously sympathized with the feelings of others; and but for the presence, or supposed presence, of some impartial spectator, as a mirror to represent to us ourselves, we should as little have known the beauty or deformity of our own moral character, as we should have known the beauty or ugliness of our external features without some mirror to reflect them to our eye."*

* I have taken this succint statement of the principles of Dr. Smith's theory from Dr. Brown, because it appears to me to be comprehensively and luminously correct; and I therefore felt it needless to attempt another. "Perhaps," says Sir James Mackintosh, "there is no Ethical work, since *Cicero's Offices*, of which an abridgment enables the reader so inadequately to estimate the merit, as the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. This is not chiefly owing to the beauty of diction, as in the case of Cicero; but to the varieties of

I do not intend attempting the exposure of all the fallacies with which this system is chargeable. It is chiefly in the one point of view in which I have been endeavoring to place other theories, that I wish to contemplate it. If, however, it merits not the designation of *enthusiasm*, I know nothing that does. It is equally entitled to the appellation, whether it be viewed in reference to the *principle* or to the *standard* of moral rectitude. In regard to the principle, it is not conceivable that its ingenious author could imagine actions to be right or wrong, *because* they had, or had not, a concurrent sympathy in our minds; as if it were the sympathy that *constituted* their rectitude, or the absence of it their delinquency, independently of anything in themselves on account of which the sympathy is experienced or withheld. If our sympathy with the actions of others, and with the emotions of the agents, only *ascertains* to us their rectitude, then it has nothing to do with the determination of the principle or foundation of virtue, but serves the purpose merely of a criterion or test. But even in this view, how unsatisfactory is it! how unavoidably unstable and fluctuating, in consequence of the exposure of our feelings of sympathy to so endless a variety of extraneous influences; some of which are constant, and

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explanation of life and manners, which embellish the book often more than they illuminate the theory. Yet, on the other hand, it must be owned, that, for purely philosophical purposes, few works more need abridgment; for the most careful reader frequently loses sight of principles buried under illustrations. The naturally copious and flowing style of the author is generally redundant; and the repetition of certain formularies of the system is, in the later editions, so frequent as to be wearisome, and sometimes ludicrous."—*Prel. Diss.* p. 358.

some incidental, and not a few of both insinuating and powerful, arising from the diversity of circumstances that may operate on the selfish principle; as well as of relations, of greater or less proximity and intimacy, in which we stand to the agents; or, it may be, of indifference, jealousy, or dislike! How uncertain a thing, alas! would virtue be, were this feeling to be its criterion! — And then, considered as a test of *our own* actions, how whimsically circuitous is the process prescribed by it, before we can determine whether we have done right or wrong! What a strange anomaly in a "theory of moral sentiments," that it should require a more complex analysis of mental feeling, to ascertain the rectitude of what we do ourselves, than to determine the virtue of the actions of others! — that it should make the process longest, where prompt and instantaneous decision is most frequently required! How extraordinary, too, is the oversight of a consideration which is not less obvious than it is fatal to the theory, — namely, that the "impartial spectator," by our sympathy with whom, in his sympathy with us, we are to determine the rectitude or the faultiness of our own act, is a spectator of our own imagining; to whom, of course, we will, naturally and unavoidably, transfer a portion at least, if not even the whole, of our self-partiality; so that, after all, our reflex sympathy with the sympathy of the unprejudiced witness turns out to be nothing more than an illusory fellow-feeling with ourselves!

But independently of these and other similar objections, the theory stands exposed, like others, to the overwhelming force of the one now under our special consideration. Those sympathies which, in their direct and reflex forms, are elevated to the high and responsible position of the criterion, at least, if not the very principle of moral

right and wrong, are the sympathies of a depraved nature, the feelings of a creature imbued to the very core with the corrupting taint of sin. They are sympathies which, being uninfluenced by the first element of moral goodness — love to the supreme Possessor and Source of all excellence — are less likely, in a vast variety of cases, to be on the side of good than of evil. According to a low standard, indeed, of sentimental virtue, which either leaves Deity out of its estimate, or assumes a character of him very different from that which, in his word, he gives of himself, it may be otherwise; there may be a more frequent coincidence between sympathy and rectitude: — (although, even taking the standard of the conventional morality of the world, the preceding objections to the theory would be far from destitute of force:) but its grand and fatal error lies in this, — that it assumes, what, alas! has no basis in truth, — the rectitude of human nature. If it be so, that that nature has lost its rectitude, then the theory, and the philosopher who framed it, are found chargeable with the strange anomaly, of making the sympathies of evil the criterion of good.

6. System of Dr. Hutcheson.

Let us now, on the same principle, very briefly examine Dr. HUTCHESON'S theory of A MORAL SENSE: — a theory which, in the phraseology of it, has been adopted by not a few, without any very distinct understanding of its real merits. They have used the terms *moral sense* and *conscience* as synonymous, without very accurately examining into the nature of either. It is not the merits of the theory in general that I have at present to discuss. I satisfy myself, (as in former cases,) with a single remark or two, merely so far illustrative of its nature as to show the applicability to it of my leading objection. The *moral sense*, as the very use of the term

sense implies, is designed to denote a supposed internal power resembling, in its operation, that of the external or corporeal senses. As the sensations derived by the latter from the objects around us, are pleasing or displeasing; so, by means of this inward mental sense, the feelings of moral approbation or disapprobation are excited in our minds, by the different actions and affections of moral agents. The operation of this moral sense is to be considered, agreeably to the designed analogy, as independent of reason and of all argumentation: and it is from the internal sensations (if I may so express myself) to which it gives rise, that our moral judgments are formed. The intimations of this moral sense are to be regarded as equally immediate, and equally sure, with the intuitive intellectual perceptions of the preceding system; or, agreeably to the analogy on which its nomenclature is founded, with the notions of things without us, received by the instrumentality of our bodily organs.

According to this theory, it would seem, that the qualities which constitute virtue, or moral goodness, must be regarded rather as *relative* than as *essential.* It makes the rectitude of any action to consist in a certain relation which it bears to this moral sense, in consequence of which it produces pleasure; in the same way as particular colors occasion sensations of pleasure, in consequence of a similar relation between them and the organ of vision, — or particular sounds, from the same kind of relation between them and the organ of hearing. This appears to make the nature of virtue dependent on the arbitrary constitution of the mind; so that, in affirming a thing to be right, we do not mean that it has in itself any property of essential and immutable rectitude, — but only that, according to the constitution of our minds, it

gives rise to a certain inward feeling of pleasure and approbation:—whence it follows, that, on the supposition of a change in the moral sense, and a consequent change in the moral sensations, there would arise a corresponding change in the nature of moral rectitude, modifying, or even, it might be, reversing, our ideas of right and wrong. By adopting the intimations of a moral sense, not in a merely analogical and figurative, but in the strict and proper acceptation of terms, in contradistinction to the mind's intuitive perception of essential truths, the authors of this system have certainly left it open to this radical objection.

Were we to understand terms figuratively, we might, in the way of analogy, without any great impropriety, have applied the designation *moral sense*, intelligibly enough to that intuitive discernment of moral distinctions, which we conceive to be the appropriate possession of a sinless creature, and, along with the perfect conformity of disposition to the perception of right, to constitute the harmony of that creature's nature with the nature of Deity. But man is not now such a creature. He is the very reverse,—not sinless, but radically sinful. And here, therefore, as before, applies our fatal objection.

What are we to think of finding the principle, or even the standard and criterion of virtue, in the moral sense, (whether understood more literally or more figuratively, more strictly or more vaguely,) of a creature whose moral nature is vitiated, and alienated from God? Might we not, quite as reasonably, nominate, as judge of colors, a man with jaundiced or otherwise distempered eyes,—or a man whose palate, in consequence of some organic or constitutional disorder, had lost its discriminating functions, an arbitrator of tastes? If there be in man's moral

vision an obscuring film, or a distorting obliquity. — if there be a hebetude in his spiritual taste, or such an inversion of its original relishes as to "put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter;" — must not this equally disqualify him from being a judge of appeal on questions regarding the principles of rectitude? Give the power of which we have been speaking what name you will, a change of name alters not the nature of the thing. It is still the power of a depraved creature, and, partaking in the depravity, cannot be safely trusted as a moral arbiter; we never can repose, with anything approaching to implicit confidence, in the correctness of its arbitrements. — Call it *conscience;* you are no nearer the truth: — for either by conscience you mean the same thing that Dr. Hutcheson meant by his moral sense, in which case there is no difference at all; — or if you mean something else, or something more, still it is the conscience of a depraved creature, and being necessarily affected by the depravity, cannot, on such a subject, be a secure standard of principle. We can no more confide in the certain rectitude of its decisions, than, in any cause of importance, we could with propriety rest a final sentence on the testimony of a witness who was liable to be suborned and bribed, or whom, on different occasions, we knew to have betrayed no very scrupulous regard to truth.

Of the proper nature of conscience we shall speak a little hereafter: — but to whatever conclusion we may come on that point, of this we are sure, that there is quite enough in its dictates to be a legitimate ground of responsibility; the corruption of heart, indeed, by which those dictates are perverted being what constitutes the very guilt of man, and can never be his apology. This is what has impaired and deadened its sensibilities, espe-

cially towards God, and has subverted its judicial integrity. The inward monitor is environed by a fearful assemblage of biasing and vitiating influences, assailing, tempting, bribing it on every hand, whispering their insinuations, alarming by their threats, and alluring by their promises. We should no more, therefore, think of taking our standard of duty from the conscience of such a creature, than we should think of receiving from him our instructions as to the nature of God. If it be true that, from the very domination of depraved affections and desires, men "did not like to retain *God* in their knowledge," we surely cannot wonder that they should have discovered an aversion not less inveterate, to retain the right knowledge of *his will;* especially when we consider, that it was in fact the dislike of his will, and the fondness for what was opposite to it, that fostered the spirit of alienation from himself, and engendered the wish for gods more congenial to their depraved propensities.

Men, I must repeat, who actually possess the benefit of revelation, may, by the aid of its unacknowledged, nay, possibly, its disowned and disparaged light, construct theories of imposing plausibility, both as to the knowledge of *Deity* and the knowledge of *duty* attainable by unassisted nature; but facts, stubborn, melancholy, unnumbered facts, are against them. Wherever, indeed, there are not entertained right conceptions of Deity, it is impossible that there should be right conceptions of duty. Where there is an unknown God, there must, to a great extent, be an unknown law. Where there are gross misconceptions of the nature and character of the Godhead, there must be corresponding misconceptions of the highest principles of rectitude, and grounds of moral obligation; and these primary misconceptions necessarily per-

vade, with a vitiating influence, the entire system of morals between man and man; for MAN CANNOT BE RIGHT WITH MAN, IF HE IS NOT RIGHT WITH GOD.

7. System of Dr. Thomas Brown.

I must now offer a few similar strictures on the moral theory of that most acute and accomplished metaphysician, and in many respects, according to the concurrent testimonies of all who knew him, most amiable and estimable man, the late Dr. THOMAS BROWN.

I cannot but express the deepest regret, — a regret in which, I am confident, my auditors will fully sympathize, that a mind like his, when speculating, on subjects like the present, with all the penetration of a discriminative intellect, — and exhibiting the results of his speculations, though at times with a needless prolixity and an almost superfluous refinement of metaphysical abstraction, yet with all the rich elegance of a scholar's erudition and a poet's fancy, — should have missed so widely of the truth, as to me he appears to have done, in r gard to the principle or ground of moral obligation. And the source of his error seems to lie in the very same quarter with that of the errors of others, — the absence of a just, — by which I mean a scriptural, view, of the present character and condition of human nature.

In the exposition of his theory of virtue, there is the same amplitude of illustration and excess of refinement, which I have mentioned as a general characteristic of his writings; — but it is not at all my intention, as it is not necessary for my present purpose, to enter minutely into the discussion of all the points involved in it which might afford room for comment and controversy. I have to do with the system now, only in one point of view; and the consideration of it in this light will not require

large quotation. Two or three sentences, in the mean time, will be sufficient.

"Why," says Dr. Brown, "does it seem to us virtue to act in this way? Why does he seem to us to have merit, or in other words to be worthy of our approbation, who has acted in this way? Why have we a feeling of obligation or duty when we think of acting in this way? The only answer which we can give to these questions is the same to all, that it is impossible for us to consider the action without feeling that, by acting in this way, we should look upon ourselves, and others would look upon us, with approving regard; and that if we were to act in a different way, we should look upon ourselves, and others would look upon us, with abhorrence, or at least with disapprobation.—It appears to us virtue, obligation, merit, because the very contemplation of the action excites in us a certain feeling of vivid approval. It is this irresistible approvableness (if I may use such a word to express briefly the relation of certain actions to the emotion that is instantly excited by them) which constitutes to us, who consider the action, the virtue of the action itself, the merit of him who performed it, the moral obligation on him to have performed it."*

You will at once perceive, that the objection mentioned to the system of Dr. Hutcheson's *moral sense*, namely, that it converts virtue into a mere relation, applies still more directly and strongly here. According to this theory, there is in virtue nothing essential,—and nothing, consequently, essentially virtuous in the actions of a moral agent considered in themselves, (in connection, of course, with their

* Lectures on the Philosophy of the Human Mind. Lecture LXXIII.

motives;) — but the virtue of the actions consists solely in a certain relation between them and our minds, — the relation by which they give rise to the immediate and vivid feeling of approval. This emotion, arising in the mind instantaneously, instead of being produced by any previous judgment on the nature of the action from which it arises, is, in the strictest sense, the foundation of our moral judgment; so that we do not experience the feeling of approbation because we judge the action right, but we judge the action right because it excites in us the feeling of approbation; the feeling not being at all generated in us from our contemplating the action as virtuous, but its virtue consisting in its relative adaptation to excite the feeling.

It is this vivid feeling of approbation, which, according to Dr. Brown, not merely indicates or ascertains to us the virtuousness of the action, but constitutes it virtuous: such is his own expression — it "constitutes the virtue of the action itself, the merit of him who performed it, and the moral obligation on him to have performed it." The conclusion, that this resolves virtue into a mere relation, and a relation dependent on the arbitrary constitution of our minds, is a conclusion from which the philosophic author of the theory is far from shrinking. He admits it; he insists upon it; he argues it. "Virtue," according to his frequently repeated statement, "being a term expressive only of the relation of certain actions, as contemplated, to certain emotions in the minds of those who contemplate them, cannot have any universality beyond that of the minds in which these emotions arise;" it is "nothing in itself, but only a general name for certain actions, which agree in exciting, when contemplated, a certain emotion of the mind;" — it is "a felt relation,

and nothing more." He defends this position against the advocates of eternal and immutable morality, with a very unsuccessful waste, as it appears to me, of metaphysical acumen, an acumen so minutely penetrating, that it seems as if it could discern extension in a mathematical point.

In showing that "right and wrong are nothing in themselves, but words expressive only of relation," and vindicating the position from the charge of making virtue something altogether dependent and precarious, he says, " It is not to moral distinctions only that this objection, if it had any force, would be applicable. Equality, proportion, it might be said, in like manner, signify nothing in the objects themselves to which they are applied, more than vice or virtue. They are as truly merely relations as the relations of morality." But equality and proportion are surely, on such a subject, very ill-chosen examples, being terms that necessarily involve in them the idea of relation to something else; which cannot be affirmed of virtue and vice, — of right and wrong in morals, without an obvious begging of the question. It would have been more to the purpose to have proved the converse, — that virtue and vice are as really mere relations as equality and proportion are.*

From the position that virtue and vice are terms of mere relation to the constitution of our minds, it appears to be an immediate and unavoidable sequence, that, on the supposition of another class of intelligent creatures being differently constituted from us, — constituted with such a nature that the vivid emotions of approbation and disapprobation should be reversed, that which pleases us

* Notes and Illustrations. Note F.

offending them, and that which offends us exciting in them the feeling of pleasure, — then that which is in us virtue would in them be vice, and that which is vice, virtue. Virtue being nothing in itself, but lying solely in the relation of the action to our emotions, I cannot see how the inference can be evaded, that, the relations and emotions being changed and inverted, there must lie a corresponding inversion of moral obligations; vice must become virtue, and virtue vice.

Should it, in answer to this, be alleged, that such a thing *cannot be*, — that the supposition is one which can never by possibility be realized, because we cannot imagine the Divine Being to constitute intelligent creatures so as that, from their original nature, vice should produce the emotion appropriate to virtue, and virtue the emotion appropriate to vice, — vice the moral sentiments of approbation, and virtue the reverse: — I should reply, I grant the impossibility; but he who urges it against my conclusion, abandons the theory. For, if virtue and vice, moral rectitude and moral pravity, are expressive of nothing belonging intrinsically to actions in their own nature, but simply of their relations to created minds, I feel myself altogether incapable of divining any reason, why these relations should not be diversified in every possible mode of variety. Why should it not be in the moral world, as it is in the natural? In the latter, there are to be found adaptations, endlessly varied, of the physical properties of matter to the structure, to the modes of life, and to the sources of enjoyment, amongst all the different tribes of sensitive being, and unnumbered relations arising from this divine arrangement, indicative of the wise and mighty benevolence of the great Creator. Why, then, should it not be thus in the former? Why should there

not be a similar variety in the adaptation of different moral natures to different modes of action, — each having its own peculiar "vivid feelings of approbation," arising from different and opposite sources, but all equally virtuous, because equally in harmony with the original and divinely instituted relations of each nature? I can conceive of nothing whatever that should have prevented this analogy between the beautiful variety of the natural and that of the moral world, excepting the existence in the Divine Mind of certain immutable principles of moral rectitude, from which, in fixing the constitution of any of his intelligent creatures, it is impossible for Deity, consistently with his own moral nature, to depart. But every supposition of this kind, I need hardly say, is subversive of the theory: — a theory, which appears to me to involve a relinquishment of everything that, in strictness of speech, at all deserves the designation of moral rectitude.

Having offered these general remarks, which will be found to have an immediate bearing on a subsequent part of our subject, I must proceed to the objection which it is my business at present specially to notice. — That that objection holds good, in all its force, against the present as against former theories, will be at once apparent from the quotation of a single sentence. "We speak always," says Dr. Brown, "relatively to the constitution of our minds; not to what we might have been constituted to admire, if we had been created by a different Being, but to what we are constituted to admire, and what, in our present circumstances, approving or disapproving with instant love or abhorrence, it is impossible for us not to believe to be, in like manner, the objects of approbation or disapprobation to Him who has endowed us with feelings

so admirably accordant with all those other gracious purposes which we discover in the economy of nature."

The ground thus taken is in agreement with that contained in an extract given in a former Lecture, as well as in many other passages, which, were it at all necessary, might be cited. Before I proceed to apply to it my leading objection, I cannot forbear taking notice of the remarkable expression used by the writer, when he supposes the possibility of our having been otherwise constituted than we are. The expression to which I allude is,—"If we had been created *by a different Being*." Was there then, after all, in the philosopher's mind, a felt recoil from the supposition of our having received a different constitution in regard to our emotions of approbation and disapprobation, from *the same* Being? Was there some secret "moral emotion," — some perhaps hardly conscious misgiving, as if such a supposition would not be quite in harmony with the immutable rectitude of the Divine nature? On the fundamental principle of the theory, that virtue and vice are nothing more than simple relations, such recoil and misgiving could have no consistent ground; — and I would fain regard the expression as indicative of the lingering of a sounder principle, in spite of his theory, in the mind of the accomplished and amiable philosopher.

But what I have at present more especially to do with is, what you cannot have failed to perceive, the entire absence, in the statements quoted, of anything like the most distant recognition of degeneracy, or of innate moral pravity, in the present nature of man. The principle is unequivocally avowed, that the likings and dislikings, the emotions of moral pleasure and moral aversion, experienced by that nature, are to be regarded as a fair and

sufficient index of the mind of Deity. He speaks of "what we are constituted to admire, and what, in our present circumstances, approving or disapproving with instant love or abhorrence, it is impossible for us not to believe to be, in like manner, the objects of approbation or disapprobation to Him who has endowed us with such feelings."

Here, then, is still the same radical mistake. The Bible doctrine of the apostate and alienated condition of man, is not only not recognized, but, in as direct terms as could well be employed short of a flat and absolute denial, contradicted. Human nature is regarded with complacency. It is so constituted that whatever it approves and loves, God approves and loves; and whatever it disapproves and hates, God disapproves and hates. I hesitate not to say, that, if this be true, the Bible is a fable. Its most explicit statements respecting the present character and condition of man are false; and the stupendous scheme of mediation and mercy, of pardon and regeneration, which it is its chief purpose to reveal, is bereft of all basis, and (its wisdom being founded on its necessity) is virtually declared foolish, by being pronounced unnecessary. It is of little moment whether these statements be at once distinctly and honestly disowned, or put through such a process of critical filtration as refines them all away, — bereaving them of their whole meaning and consistency, in order to bring them to anything like harmony with the *dicta* of a self-sufficient philosophy; and so rendering the Book which contains them, as a source of instruction to the unlettered and the poor, utterly inappropriate and incompetent.

In combating the doctrine of innate ideas, Mr. Locke, following Aristotle, has compared the human mind to a

sheet of white paper, on which characters of different descriptions may subsequently be written. By those philosophers who deny the innate depravity of human nature, the comparison has frequently been applied to the mind in regard to its moral state, its dispositions and tendencies. It will be a juster comparison, if, in this respect, we liken the mind to a sheet of paper on which have been written characters in sympathetic ink, which are not discernible by the eye, till, by approximation to the fire, or by some appropriate chemical application, they are brought out into legible distinctness. So it is with the principles of evil in infancy. We may not, for a time, be sensible of their presence; and may be delighted with the smiling harmlessness of the little babe. But the principles are there; and require only the influence of circumstances to bring them into practical and visible manifestation, — a manifestation, which, to the eye of even a superficial observer, commences at a very early period.

A philosopher of the class referred to, we might expect to find (if indeed he thought the attempt worth his while) endeavoring to bring the representations of the Apostle Paul into accordance with his own, by explaining the affirmation, that "the carnal mind is enmity against God," as without doubt having reference to such profligate sensualists as, by a long course of vicious indulgence, have deteriorated and debased their nature, have allowed their appetites to get the ascendency of their reason and their moral principles, have subjected the soul to the body, the spirit with its exquisite powers and divine sensibilities, to the dominion of the flesh. If the Apostle's testimony is not openly and honestly discarded, (which would be by far the more manly part,) he must not under

the designation of the carnal mind, be allowed to mean human nature universally, far less human nature in the unsophisticated simplicity, and undebauched innocence, in which it is born into the world. The "carnal mind" must not be regarded as at all comprehensive of the species, but only of some occasional, though, it may be, too frequent varieties. It expresses not the generic character but only the exception; not what mankind are, but what individual men become. It is in this way that the plainest and most unequivocal statements of the word of the living God are too frequently dealt with; — not verbally denied, yet really disbelieved; not explained, but explained away. It is clear as noon, that the system of which I am now speaking, and the Bible doctrine of human depravity, cannot possibly exist together. The system has been framed altogether independently of any such doctrine. There is not the remotest recognition of it. The introduction of it would displace the very key-stone of the arch, and bring the whole fabric to ruins. Had Dr. Brown viewed man as at all sustaining the character of a fallen creature, whose moral principles and feelings are corrupt and vitiated, it would have been impossible for him to frame his theory. It could have had no basis in his mind on which to rest; and, if the doctrine of human depravity, however obnoxious to the scorn of philosophy, be indeed a truth, then is its very foundation laid in error; or rather, the entire structure is no better than an aerial castle, splendid but visionary, the day-dream of a philosophic reverie.

8. System of utility, as maintained by Hume and others.

Permit me, in the remainder of this Lecture, to call your attention to another, and only another system, and to examine it on the same

principle, — I mean the system which places the foundation and the criterion of virtue in UTILITY.

Mr. Hume's definition of virtue makes it coincident with whatever is agreeable and useful to ourselves and others; — agreeable and useful to ourselves without injury to others, and to others without injury to ourselves. Be it remembered, that in the nomenclature of this philosopher, pleasure and utility were limited in their import to the present life; there being, according to him, no futurity of conscious existence beyond its termination. In this respect it corresponds with the Epicurean theory, adverted to in a former Lecture; although, in admitting into its estimate of utility what is agreeable to *others* as well as to ourselves, it has less in it than that theory of the element of selfishness. Mr. Hume's definition has been conceived by some to involve in it a confounding of things that are in their nature essentially different. If virtue, it has been alleged, consists in utility, then whatever is useful ought to be virtuous; from which it seems to follow, that in the mind of the hungry man there should be associated a strong sentiment of moral approbation with a comfortable meal, and in the mind of the man of science with a spinning-jenny or a steam engine. Dr. Adam Smith, Dr. Brown, and others, have urged this objection strongly; the former of these two philosophers summing up what he says in the pithy statement, that according to the system which is founded on such a definition, "we have no other reason for praising a man than that for which we commend a chest of drawers." I at one time concurred fully in the validity of this objection. It now, I confess, appears to my mind in a different light. Mr. Hume, I apprehend, hardly gets justice in it. It ought, in the whole discussion, to be previously understood and

assumed, that when we treat of *virtue*, we treat of what relates exclusively, to the feelings and actions of *living, conscious voluntary agents.* Much that is physically useful may be found in the natural world; but we do not associate the utility with any conceptions of virtue, for the simple reason, that it is not found in that department of nature to which all our ideas of virtue are previously understood to be restricted. It certainly does not legitimately follow, that because the usefulness of a steam engine *is* the consideration on account of which we *value* it, therefore the usefulness of the action of a moral agent, *is not* and *cannot be* the consideration on account of which we *approve* it;—or that because we approve the action of a voluntary agent on account of its utility, therefore, wherever we discover utility, whether it be the result of the action of such an agent or not, we must experience the same kind of approbation. Dr. Brown reasons thus:—"It is evidently, then, not mere utility which constitutes the essence of virtue, or which constitutes the measure of virtue; since we feel, for the most useful inanimate objects, even when their usefulness is to continue as long as the whole race of beings that from age to age are to be capable of profiting by them, no emotions of the kind which we feel when we consider the voluntary actions of those who are capable of knowing and willing the good which they produce. A benevolent man and a steam engine may both be instrumental to the happiness of society, and the quantity of happiness produced by the unconscious machine may be greater perhaps, than that produced by the living agent; but there is no imaginary increase or diminution of the utility of the one and of the other, that can make the feelings with which we view them shadow into each other, or

correspond in any point of the scale." "Though," continues he, "it is impossible for the theorist not to feel the irresistible force of this argument, when he strives in vain to think of some infinite accession of utility to a mere machine, which may procure for it all the veneration that is given to virtue, he can yet take refuge in the obscurity of a verbal distinction. Utility, he will tell us, is not in every instance followed by this veneration, it is only utility in the actions of living beings that is followed by it; and when even all the actions of living beings are shown not to produce it, but only such actions as had in view that moral good which we admire, he will consent to narrow his limitation still more, and confine the utility which he regards as the same with virtue, to certain voluntary actions of living beings. Does he not perceive, however, that in making these limitions, he has conceded the very point in question? He admits that the actions of men are not valued merely as being useful in which case they must have ranked in virtue with all things that are useful, exactly according to their place in the scale of utility, but for something which may be useful, yet which merely as useful would never have excited the feelings which it excites when considered as a voluntary choice of good."*

In all this, however plausible, there appears to me a lurking fallacy. In such discussions, as I have already said, it should on all hands be previously understood, that virtue, independently of every question about the ground of its approvableness belongs exlusively to the department of voluntary agency;—that consciousness and voluntariness are essential to its nature, whatever be

* Lecture LXXVII.

the peculiarity in it that excites the sentiment of approbation. Neither consciousness nor voluntariness is itself that peculiarity; these being common to moral actions generally, the evil as well as the good. What then is it? Is it *utility?* No, it is alleged; else it would follow, that whatever is useful would be virtuous. But this is a *non-sequitur*. If it be previously understood, as in all reason it ought to be, that virtue belongs exclusively to the department of rational and voluntary agency, then to allege that because it is its utility that renders an action *within this department* approvable, therefore whatever is useful, though *without this department*, must in the same sense be approvable, is a palpable sophism: — because, although it may have the common property of usefulness, it has not the special property of voluntariness. When Dr. Brown says, in the preceding citation, "The theorist admits that the actions of men are not valued merely as useful, in which case they must have ranked in virtue with all things that are useful, exactly according to their place in the scale of utility; but for something which may be useful, or rather which is useful, yet which, merely as useful, never could have excited the feelings which it excites when considered as *a voluntary choice of good;*" what does he superadd to utility as necessary to the excitement of moral approbation? Is there anything more than *voluntariness?* Yet it is not in the voluntariness that the virtue consists; for, to render an action virtuous, or capable of "exciting vivid moral emotions," it must not only be a voluntary choice, but a "voluntary choice *of good*." Might not the theorist, then, fairly retort, is it not on account of *the good* which the agent voluntarily chooses, that his action does excite the emotion of approbation? And is not this the very theory of utility?

that in the actions of voluntary agents (in which alone, any moral principle whether good or evil, is to be sought) the virtue consists in the good or benefit to which, in the purpose of the agent, they tend? — The language of Dr. Dwight, in replying to the same objection — the objection that if virtue is founded in utility, everything which is useful must so far be virtuous — is indignantly strong: yet it does not seem without reason: — "This objection it is hardly necessary to answer. Voluntary usefulness is the only virtue. A smatterer in moral philosophy knows, that understanding and will are necessary to the existence of virtue. He who informs us that, if virtue is founded on utility, animals, vegetables, and minerals, the sun, the moon and the stars must be virtuous so far as as they are useful, is either disposed to trifle with mankind for their amusement, or supposes them to be triflers."*

I have been led to offer these remarks in justice to the theory. Let no one from this imagine that I am arguing in its support. Associating with it the ideas of utility and agreeableness entertained by Mr. Hume, — ideas that neither rose to God nor extended into eternity, but were bounded by the present benefit and present enjoyment of the creature, — the principle of it is one which, both in littleness and in laxity, is worthy of a place beside the system of universal and dreary scepticism in which he sought to involve all the departments of metaphysical science. In confining the agreeable and the useful to that life which, "as a vapor endureth for a little and then vanisheth away," it is unworthy the possessor of a nature, which,

* Dwight's Theology. Sermon XCIX. — Notes and Illustrations. Note G.

though fallen, is still immortal, and still, when its obliquity of disposition is corrected, capable of such lofty aspirings, and of such divine and eternal joys; and in constituting men themselves the judges of the agreeable and the useful, and identifying virtue with whatever promises to contribute to their own and one another's pleasure and advantage, it gives the sanction of a plenary indulgence to every appetite and desire, whose present gratification holds out this promise. What a maxim for the rule of conduct to a depraved creature! that the only question he has to ask is, what is agreeable or what is useful to himself, with the sole restriction that his own gratification do not interfere, in the way of prevention or dimunition, with the gratification of others! — that there is nothing whatever, either to oblige him to one course or to restrain him from another, beyond the single consideration of what he likes, provided the indulgence of his liking does no injury to his fellow men! This is to constitute the propensities of man's apostate nature, and his calculations of benefit under all the biasing sway of these propensities, the criterion of moral rectitude: — in other words, it is to reduce moral rectitude to nothing more than a name. For since present pleasure and profit may arise, at sundry times and under varying circumstances, from different and even opposite actions and courses of conduct, vice and virtue become, by this means, in themselves indifferent; the good or the evil in either being in no case absolute, but merely relative to their present effects.

But the Utilitarian system has been maintained on higher and more extended grounds than those of Mr Hume's contracted and heartless scepticism. It has been held and vindicated by those who, in estimating the happiness of the individual, take into account the whole ex-

tent of his immortal being, — and who, moreover, with individual benefit associate the general good of the universe. — These, it must be admitted, are high and important ends. Next to the glory of the Divine Being himself, (which of necessity stands first, there being nothing to which, without impiety, we can fancy it to give way,) we cannot conceive of any ends either prior or superior to the happiness of immortal intelligences, and the well-being of the entire creation. Still, however, it remains a question, how far conduciveness even to these is what properly *constitutes* virtue or moral rectitude. Instead of its conduciveness to good constituting its essential nature, — from its essential nature may arise its conduciveness to good. High as the ends are which have been mentioned, they are still, (as may be noticed more fully hereafter,) even although embracing the universe and eternity, far short of the full and legitimate acceptation of the term *utility*; which, in the estimate of final causes, ought to be understood as rising from the created to the uncreated, and, along with the good of the universe, embracing the glory of the Godhead. When so understood, it will certainly follow, that whatever really conduces to these two great ends *must be good*; because in these two ends there is an exhaustion of all that is imaginable by our minds; — the Godhead and the universe comprehending all that exists. But the inquiry which, even then, as I have just hinted, will remain, is this — whether virtue is good *because it conduces to these ends*, or whether it does not necessarily conduce to these ends *because it is good*: — in other words, whether the system, even in this loftiest and most enlarged view of it, goes far enough back; — whether there be not ultimate principles of moral rectitude, necessary and eternal, existing previously to all possible

trial and manifestation of their tendencies; and whether the actual evolution of the goodness of those tendencies, commencing of course with the earliest date of creation, instead of being what essentially constitutes moral rectitude itself, ought not rather to be regarded as the native and appropriate result of the principles of rectitude, and, by consequence, to a mind capable of applying it, a fair and decisive test of what is in accordance with those principles.

But what I have at present specially to insist upon is, the utter incompetency of man, on the supposition that utility were admitted to be both the principle and the criterion of rectitude, to apply the criterion, or to be judge of such utility. Even if man were sinless, the incompetency might be predicated of him, on the ground of the vastness of the subject, and the limitation of his faculties and his means of observation. Of such a creature, even when free of all contracting and corrupting influence, how narrow must be the conceptions of what is conducive to the good of the universe, and to the glory of its Maker! The phrases, like others formerly noticed, are easily uttered; and, aided as we are by what we already know from God himself, we are apt to fancy that we understand them; but the observation made about "*eternal fitnesses*" is not less applicable to them: they are of boundless import, altogether beyond the grasp of any intellect but that by which the universe in all its amplitude, and Godhead in all its infinitude, can be fully comprehended. If then, on such a subject, the conceptions even of a holy creature must be so inadequate; how biased, how various, how inconsistent, how frequently pernicious, must those be of a creature under the dominion of moral pravity! How partial, and many a time how false, are the notions of

such a creature, of what constitutes, and of what may be conducive to, *his own* benefit! And how inexpressibly foolish, then, the idea of leaving to the determination of such a creature what will best promote the interests of the universe — a creature, who knows but little of his own world, diminutive as it is amid the immensity of creation, — and who, with regard to the constitution of other worlds, and the conditions and characters of their inhabitants, is unavoidably and profoundly ignorant; a creature, too, in whose perverted mind the glory of Deity is little understood and less regarded, and whose degenerate principles, even were this knowledge much more extensive than it is, cannot but vitiate and invalidate all his general conclusions. In short, there is here, as in former cases, the same fundamental objection. Even if the theory were, in the principle of it, correct; still, if the application of it is to lie with man, the expectation of a satisfactory result must be equally vain and presumptuous. I can imagine nothing more wildly preposterous, than the setting of such a creature, imbued throughout with the taint of moral apostasy, to investigate and settle the essential principles of moral rectitude, by determining questions relative to the good of the universe, while every day and every hour are convicting him of numberless and miserable mistakes in the limited question of what is most conducive to his own! — Even Dr. Brown, with no such views of human nature, admits the incompetency of a creature with faculties so limited, for settling principles of which the range is so boundless: — "The coincidence of general good," says he, "with those particular affections which are felt by us to be virtuous, is, indeed, it must be admitted, a proof that this general good has been the object of some being who has adapted them to each

other. But it was of a Being far higher than man — of him who alone is able to comprehend the whole system of things; and who allots to our humbler faculties and affections those partial objects which alone they are able to comprehend; giving us still, however, the noble privilege

> '——— To join
> Our partial movement with the master-wheel
> Of the great world, and serve that sacred end,
> Which he, the unerring Reason, keeps in view.' *

— That man, like all the other creatures of God, has subserved the "sacred end" that is kept in view by the infinite and "unerring Reason," it were impious to question. But, alas, how has this been? Not by a voluntary and holy co-operation of the subject creature with the supreme and rightful Governor; but by that Governor's having, in wisdom and love, availed himself of the apostasy of the creature, to present to the wondering universe a manifestation, the most stupendous in glory and delightful in interest, of his own all-perfect character; thus promoting the great purposes of his moral government, and rearing on the ruins of human nature a magnificent temple to his praise; — a temple, towards which, for aught we can tell, the eyes of an intelligent universe may look in their adorations, just as from all countries of the world through which they were scattered, the eyes of the chosen people of Israel, were turned towards the Sanctuary of Jehovah at Jerusalem.

It is my intention to devote the next Lecture to an examination of the moral system of Bishop Butler, assign-

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* Lecture LXXVII.

ing, at the same time, my reasons for so doing: — after which our way will be clear for the more direct discussion of what we conceive to be the truth on the interesting questions at issue.

LECTURE IV.

THE MORAL SYSTEM OF BISHOP BUTLER.

ROM. II. 14.

"For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law; these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves."

RESPECTING the various theories which, in former Lectures, we have had under our brief review, it has been my object to show you, that they are all chargeable with the twofold fallacy mentioned at the outset of my strictures, and are all alike vitiated by it; — namely, that in each one of them, the human nature is assumed as the standard by which virtue is to be estimated, and man, the possessor of that nature, as the judge by whom the estimate is to be made; while if man is a fallen and morally depraved creature, the standard is fallacious, and the judge incompetent; the source of the information deceptive, and the theorist who uses it himself a subject of the deceptive influence. Yet even by philosophical divines, justly esteemed evangelical, there has at times been discovered rather more than enough of a disposition to *give in* to such modes of reasoning; — to forget and overlook the grand fact of man's degeneracy, or at least while they are framing from the human nature their moral theories, to mitigate its extent, and soften down its

virulence. With how much of explanation, for example, must such a statement as the following be taken (and yet it is comparatively a moderate one) to bring it to clear and full congruity with the Bible account of man; "We approve or disapprove of actions, not because of their tendency to happiness or the contrary, but in consequence of the moral constitution of our nature; which constitution, as God is its Author, we are to regard as furnishing the expression of his will. He who has formed us in his own image, has not rendered it necessary for us to observe relations and to estimate tendencies and effects, previously to our approving of an action as right, or our disapproving of it as wrong; and, being conscious that we love virtue and hate vice without reference to consequences, merely because they are virtue and vice, we justly infer, that it is not on account of their consequences that virtue is lovely, and vice hateful, that the one produces the emotions of approbation and the other of disapprobation." There is a sense, and there is a measure, in which all this is true; but both in the phraseology and in the principles of the statement, there seems to me to be more of the professorial chair than of the evangelical pulpit,—more of the human nature that is eulogized by philosophers, than of the human nature that is depicted and deplored by Prophets and Apostles. Would not one suppose, were we not otherwise aware of the author's sentiments, that the nature of which he thus writes *retained* the image in which it was formed, and was still characterized by a native love of goodness for its own sake, and a corresponding hatred of all that is evil?

System of Bishop Butler.

As a fuller exemplification of the systems of philosophical theologians, I have selected, for illustration and comment in the present Lecture, that of

the justly celebrated BISHOP BUTLER; a man to whose penetration, and learning, and argumentative sagacity, Christianity is under such deep and lasting obligation. In his "Analogy" he has shown, with admirable skill, that the God of nature and of providence is the same as the God of revelation; and that the principle of the objections, urged by infidels against the latter, holds with equal force against all the intimatians of Deity given by the two former; — so that not only would such objections, if valid in opposition to the authority of the Scriptures, be equally subversive of whatever passes under the designation of natural religion, or of pure theism, — but that the identity of the characteristics of the divine procedure, according to the discoveries of revelation, with those which come before us in the constitution of nature and the course of providence, affords a corroborative evidence of the truth of revealed religion. In presuming to offer any strictures on the moral system of such a man, I would be understood as speaking with the sincerest diffidence. It does appear to me, however, that his scheme is defective; and that its defectiveness arises from the same cause to which we have been tracing the errors of others.*

* I feel the diffidence I have thus expressed the more becoming, when I find, in a work published since this Lecture was delivered, Bishop Butler's Sermons pronounced by an authority so eminent as that of Dr. Chalmers, to contain "the most precious repository of sound ethical principles extant in any language; (*Bridgewater Treatise*, Vol, I. p. 68.) and the writer himself designated "that great and invaluable expounder both of the human constitution and of moral science." (*Ibid.* p. 71.) Another high authority writes in the following terms: — "There do not appear to be any *errors* in the ethical principles of Bishop Butler. The following remarks are intended to point out some *defects* in his scheme; and even that attempt is made with the unfeigned humility of one who rejoices

It is not my present purpose to enter into detailed consideration of the various personal and social virtues, as they are analyzed in the discussions of this profound writer, — or even of all the more prominent characteristics of his system. The beautiful light in which he places the question respecting the disinterestedness of the social affections, we may have a future opportunity of noticing. In the meanwhile, we have to do with his theory, only in some of its still more general and fundamental principles.

"There are two ways," says this eminent writer, "in which the subject of morals may be treated. One begins from inquiring into the abstract relations of the things; the other from a matter of fact, namely, what the particular nature of man is, its several parts, their economy or constitution; from which it proceeds to determine what course of life it is which is correspondent to this whole nature. In the former method, the conclusion is expressed thus, that vice is contrary to the nature and reason of things; in the latter, that it is a violation or breaking in upon our own nature. Thus they both lead us to the

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in an opportunity of doing justice to that part of the writings of a great philosopher, which has not been so clearly understood, nor so justly estimated, by the generality, as his other works." (*Sir James Mackintosh's Prelim. Diss.* p. 345.) The sentences to which the present note is appended, were also delivered before I had perused Sir James's Dissertation. Like him, I have spoken of Butler's moral system as *defective* more than erroneous; although I would not by this be understood to mean, that I regard it, when tried by the test of Scripture, as in every one of its principles immaculate. But even in speaking of the *defects* of such a thinker and reasoner, although they may not be of the same description as those specified by Sir James, I feel pleased to cover my seeming presumption under the sanction of so great a name.

same thing, our obligations to the practice of virtue; and thus they exceedingly strengthen and enforce each other. The first seems the most direct formal proof, and, in some respects, the least liable to cavil and dispute; the latter is, in a peculiar manner, adapted to satisfy a fair mind, and is more easily applicable to the several particular relations and circumstances of life."* The latter is the principle on which the author proceeds in those of his sermons, that are particularly devoted to this subject, as well as throughout his "Analogy," and in the Treatise on Virtue appended to it.

Resemblance of this scheme to that of Zeno.

The scheme of Butler, indeed, bears a very close resemblance, in its leading principles, to that of the ancient Stoical school; of which he adopts the phraseology, only attaching to it a Christian commentary. It may be designated the system of Zeno baptized into Christ. That system, you will recollect, placed virtue in *living according to nature;* nature, by one class of its abettors, being understood generally, and by another with restricted reference to the nature of man. It is in this latter sense that the terms are to be interpreted in the scheme of Butler. He repeatedly quotes, with approbation, appropriating it to his own purpose, the language of the ancients; and pronounces their manner of speaking, when they said that virtue consisted in following nature, "not loose and undeterminate, but clear and distinct, strictly just and true."† The object of his three sermons "on human nature, or on man considered as a moral agent," is (to use his own terms) "to explain what is meant by the nature of man, when it is said that virtue consists in following, and vice in deviating from

* Preface to Sermons, pp. 3, 4. † Pref. to Sermons.

it; and, by explaining, to show that the assertion is true." "As speculative truth," he says, "admits of different kinds of proof, so likewise moral obligations may be shown by different methods. If the real nature of any creature leads him, and is adapted to such and such purposes only, or more than any other, this is a reason to believe the author of that nature intended it for those purposes."*

Explanation of his own phraseology.

To an objection which naturally suggests itself, and which he specifies as having actually been made, namely, that "following nature" is a phrase which "can hardly have any other sense put upon it but acting as any of the several parts, without distinction, of a man's nature happened most to incline him," and is therefore "at best a very loose way of talk," — he replies, with much, it is admitted, both of ingenuity and correctness, by distinguishing between the *parts* and the *whole* of any complex system. He thus instances in a watch. The quotation is somewhat long; but it presents a clear and explicit view of the principle of his system: — "Suppose the several parts taken to pieces, and placed apart from each other; let a man have ever so exact a notion of these several parts, unless he considers the respects and relations which they have to each other, he will not have anything like the idea of a watch. Suppose these several parts brought together, and anyhow united; neither will he yet, be the union ever so close, have an idea which will bear any resemblance to that of a watch. But let him view those several parts put together in the manner of a watch; let him form a notion of the relations which those several parts have to each other — all conducive, in their respective ways, to

* Serm. II.

this purpose, — showing the hour of the day; and then he has the idea of a watch. Thus it is with regard to the inward frame of man. Appetites, passions, affections, and the principle of reflection, considered merely as the several parts of our inward nature, do not at all give us an idea of the system or constitution of this nature; because the constitution is formed by somewhat not yet taken into consideration, namely, by the relations which these several parts have to each other; the chief of which is the authority of reflection or conscience. It is from considering the relation which the several appetites and passions in the inward frame have to each other, and above all the supremacy of reflection or conscience, that we get the idea of the system or constitution of human nature. And from the idea itself *it will as fully appear, that this our nature, that is, constitution, is adapted to virtue, as from the idea of a watch it appears, that its nature, that is, constitution or system, is adapted to measure time.* What in fact or event commonly happens, is nothing to this question. Every work of art is apt to be out of order: but this is so far from being according to its system, that, let the disorder increase, and it will totally destroy it. This is merely by way of explanation, what economy, system, or constitution, is. And thus far the cases are perfectly parallel. If we go further, there is indeed a difference, nothing to the present purpose, but too important a one ever to be omitted. A machine is inanimate and passive; but we are agents. Our constitution is put in our own power. We are charged with it; and therefore we are accountable for any violation or disorder of it."*

* Pref. pp. v, vi.

"Following nature," therefore, is not, in Butler's system, to be understood as meaning, that we follow the present impulse of every appetite or passion; but that we follow out the obvious design of that complex constitution, of which *conscience* is the ruling power,—the grand moving spring. In "an adequate notion" of man's nature there must, as he expresses himself, be included, "that one of the principles of action, conscience or reflection, compared with the rest as they all stand together in the nature of man, plainly bears upon it marks of authority over all the rest, and claims the absolute direction of them all, to allow or forbid their gratification; a disapprobation of reflection being in itself a principle manifestly superior to a mere propension. And the conclusion is, that to allow no more to this superior principle, or part of our nature, than to other parts;—to let it govern or guide only occasionally in common with the rest, as its turn happens to come, from the temper and circumstances one happens to be in; this is not to act conformably to the constitution of nature, unless he allows to that superior principle the absolute authority which is due to it. And this conclusion is abundantly confirmed from hence, that one may determine what course of action the economy of man's nature requires without so much as knowing in what degree of *strength* the several principles prevail, or which of them have actually the greatest influence."*

"Every bias, instinct, or propension within, is a real part of our nature, but not the whole: add to these the superior faculty, whose office it is to adjust, manage, and preside over them, and take in this its natural superiority, and you complete the idea of human nature. And as in

* Preface, pp. viii, ix.

civil government, the constitution is broken in upon and violated by power and strength prevailing over authority; so the constitution of man is broken in upon, by the lower faculties or principles within prevailing over that which is in its nature supreme over them all."*

From these extracts you will readily perceive, in what sense the nomenclature of Zeno is to be interpreted, when adopted by Butler. With him, living "according to *nature*" is the same thing with living according to *conscience;* conscience, in the complex constitution of the human mind, being the legitimate ruling principle. — Hence he says of man, that, "from his make, constitution, or nature, he is, in the strictest and most proper sense, a law to himself:" that "he hath the rule of right within," and that "what is wanting is only that he honestly attend to it:" † — and, in enforcing the authority of this natural monitor, — "Your obligation to obey this law is its being the law of your nature. That your conscience approves of and attests to such a course of action, is itself alone an obligation. Conscience does not only offer itself to show us the way we should walk in, but it likewise carries its own authority with it, that it is our natural guide, — the guide assigned us by the Author of our nature. It therefore belongs to our condition of being; it is our duty to walk in that path and to follow this guide, without looking about to see whether we may not possibly forsake them with impunity." ‡

Sense in which true, and sense in which questionable.

Now I entertain no doubt, that this is a just account of the original constitution of our nature, — that such is the due subordination of its various powers and propensions, — such the legitimate

* Serm. III. † Serm. III. ‡ Serm. III.

order of their respective operations. But you can hardly fail to have been sensible, how little reference there is, in these representations, to the fallen condition and depraved character of this nature. I am far from intending to insinuate, that the fallen and degenerate condition of man has no place in Butler's Theology. When treating, in his "Analogy," of the economy of redemption by a Mediator, he speaks of "the world's being in a state of ruin" as "a supposition which seems the very ground of the Christian Dispensation," and argues, on this ground, the reasonableness, from the analogy of divine Providence, of the scheme of mediatorial interposition. But he is one of those to whom I have already alluded, as, in their reasonings on morals, appearing at times as if they had forgotten the characters of human nature which, on other occasions, they have admitted: and I must be excused for adding, that not only in this seeming forgetfulness, but also in the vague generality of the terms in which human degeneracy is usually expressed, and in the statements given by him of the influence of the Redeemer's atonement, and of the conditions, on man's part, of acceptance with God, there is evidence, that his impressions of the real amount of this degeneracy, as existing in the moral state and character of each individual man, were hardly adequate to the unqualified and humbling representations of the inspired volume.

In the extracts which have just been given from the Bishop's Sermons, we are certainly, in a great degree, allowed to lose sight of the present character of human nature, and are left to suppose it, in its present state, such as it was designed, by the Author of its constitution, to be. The various parts of the watch are put together by the skill of the artist, each in its proper place, and all

relatively adjusted to the production of a certain effect,—the correct measurement of time. So is it, according to Bishop Butler's theory, with human nature. It is "*adapted to virtue*" *as evidently as* "*a watch is adapted to measure time.*" But, suppose the watch, by the perverse interference of some lover of mischief, to have been so thoroughly disorganized,—its moving and its subordinate parts and powers so changed in their collocation and their mutual action, that the result has become a constant tendency to go backward instead of forward, or to go backwards and forwards with irregular, fitful, ever-shifting alternation,—so as to require a complete re-modeling, and especially a re-adjustment of its great moving power, to render it fit for its original purpose;—would not this be a more appropriate analogy for representing the present character of fallen man? The whole machine is out of order. The main-spring has been broken; and an antagonist power works all parts of the mechanism. It is far from being with human nature, as Butler, by the similitude of the watch, might lead his reader to suppose. The watch, when duly adjusted, is only, in his phrase, "liable to be out of order." This might suit for an illustration of the state of human nature *at first*, when it received its constitution from its Maker. But it has lost its appropriateness *now*. That nature, alas! is not now a machine that is merely "apt to go out of order;" it *is* out of order; so radically disorganized, that the grand original power which impelled all its movements has been broken and lost, and an unnatural power, the very opposite of it, has taken its place; so that it cannot be restored to the original harmony of its working, except by the interposition of the Omnipotence that framed it.

The Bishop speaks of the legitimate supremacy of conscience. — I shall not at present dispute the propriety of the terms; although I cannot but conceive that conscience should rather be regarded as an *arbitrator of legitimacy* amongst influential powers, than as the great ruling power itself; that the supremacy amongst the legitimate principles of action in the human constitution should be assigned to a power more directly moral in its own nature than conscience; and that conscience itself, if freed in its arbitration from corrupting influences, would determine the supremacy on behalf of *love to God*, and maintain the paramount rights of this principle. — But, assuming the correctness of the Bishop's representation, what I have at present to say is, that, if human nature be in a state of depravity, conscience, directly or indirectly, must partake of that depravity. If it did not, indeed, there could be no depravity. If the ruling power were right, all would be right that is subordinate. But where, I ask, in human nature now, is conscience, in the highest department of its exercise, to which we have just alluded? — where is "conscience *towards God?*" What are the results of its authority? What the actual state of things under its dictatorship? — Let the speedy and universal loss of the original knowledge of the true God, answer the question. Let the polytheistic superstitions of heathenism, with all their fooleries, impurities, and ruthless cruelties, — let the sceptical theism, and the presumptuous atheism of philosophy, — let the manifest and conscious ungodliness of the whole race of mankind, — answer the question.

According to Butler, (and nothing can be more true,) "wanton disregard and irreverence towards an infinite

Being, our Creator, are by no means as suitable to the nature of man, as reverence and dutiful submission of heart towards that Almighty Being." But an abstract proposition as to essential fitness and propriety is a different thing from a statement of fact. We ask, what is the *matter of fact*, as to the operation of conscience in this particular? Has this presiding and ruling power in the "nature of man" been found fulfilling its appropriate function, inspiring right feelings, and dictating right practice, towards the one blessed Object of reverence, and love, and homage, and obedience? Does not the entire history of our race, from the beginning hitherto, reply in the negative? — And if conscience has failed here, we must insist upon it that it has essentially failed in everything. It has proved treacherous in regard to the very first principle of all obligation; and it carries the spirit of this treason against God into the entire administration of its perverted power, — Even in its dictates towards fellow creatures, too, how sadly is it under the domination of the appetites, and passions, and selfish desires! — how constantly liable to be swayed and bribed to wrong decisions; and how much in danger are even its right judgments of being set aside by the power of such interfering influences! It may be, and incessantly is, tampered with in a thousand ways. The question, therefore, on our present subject, comes to be — how we can be sure of an unbiased verdict; — and how, from a nature of which the principles are so disordered, and the aberrations, especially in the highest and most essential of all departments, so prodigious, we can, with any assurance of correctness, extract the pure and primary elements of moral goodness.

It is not at all, whether conscience ought or ought not to be the ruling power, and the appetites and desires, the

affections and passions, in subordination to its authoritative jurisdiction. This was the original state of things; and so long as this state continued, man, in "following nature," followed a sure guide, — a guide, whose counsels, intuitively discerned, were all divine. But when, in a discussion like the present, we proceed on such a view of human nature, our argument becomes purely hypothetical. Human nature, in this view of it, has now no existence. If it had; — if it retained its original character; — if all were in the harmony of holy principle, and under the direction of an inwardly presiding and never resisted Deity; — we should require no discussions to determine either the principle or the rule of moral obligation. But the question is, whether, in human nature, as it now is, we have sufficient data, to warrant our assuming it as a standard from which to ascertain the principles of rectitude. Here, in my apprehension, lies the principal fallacy of Butler's system. Virtue, according to him, consists in "following nature;" but then the nature to be followed is not the nature of man as it now is: or, if it be, then, as formerly hinted, the conception entertained by the theorist of the depravity of man as a fallen creature, must have been far short of the scriptural representation of it.*

Appeal of Butler to the authority of Scripture.

To Scripture, however, the appeal is actually made. The authority of the inspired Apostle of the Gentiles is considered as decisive in favor of the theory. The passage referred to is our text and context — Rom. ii. 14, 15: — "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law

* Notes and Illustrations. Note H.

unto themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another." It will be necessary for us to consider, with some little attention, what is the amount of meaning in these remarkable expressions.

Examination of it.

From the correspondence of the terms, "who show the work of the law written in their hearts," with one of the promises of the New Covenant, "I will write my laws in their hearts," as well as from the difficulty which has been felt in applying such terms to the persons of whom the Apostle himself had just before drawn so dark and hideous a portraiture, — some interpreters have conceived the whole passage to have reference to *converted* Gentiles, — those in whom the promise of the covenant, just quoted, had been graciously verified. I shall not enter on any exposure of the fallacy of this explanation, as I agree with Bishop Butler in applying it to the heathen, and the discussion of the other interpretation would only lead me away from my subject.

All who are acquainted with this Apostle's writings are aware, that, in speaking of unregenerate human nature, he uses no gentle and measured terms. His unqualified testimony is given in few words, but the words are full of meaning: — they were adverted to, in a different connection, in our last Lecture; but require a little additional comment now: — "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God; neither indeed can be."* In the preceding context, he had divided men into two descriptions: — those who "are

* Rom. viii. 7.

after the flesh," who "walk after the flesh," who "mind the things of the flesh," — and those who "are after the Spirit," who "walk after the Spirit," who "mind the things of the Spirit." He recognizes no intermediate, no neutral class; so that all who are *not* after the Spirit must be numbered amongst those who *are* after the flesh. It requires, indeed, but a glance at Paul's writings to satisfy any candid mind, that with him, the distinction between the flesh and the Spirit is the same as the distinction between unregenerate and regenerate human nature.

This "carnal mind," in different conditions, and under the influence of various modifying circumstances, may assume an almost endless diversity of aspects, some grosser, and others more refined: — but under all its modifications its generic character is "enmity against God," — alienation of affection and desire from him. The evidence of this enmity, is stated to lie in the fact of insubordination and disobedience, — "*it is not subject to the law of God;*" and the cause of the insubordination and disobedience is, reciprocally, affirmed to lie in the enmity, — alienation from God and subjection to his law being necessarily incompatible — "*neither indeed can be.*" If, then, the primary and essential principle of the divine law is love to God, — and if the unregenerate mind is "enmity against God," it must necessarily be in a very restricted and qualified sense indeed, that the Apostle represents the Gentiles as "showing the work of the law written in their hearts."

When the promise of the New Covenant is fulfilled in any sinner's experience, it is effected by Jehovah's giving that sinner a heart to love him; the transition in conversion being, substantially, a transition from enmity to love: — but, previously to this change, there is not in any

human heart the true principle of subjection to the law of God. If, indeed, there were, if, in man's natural state, the law were still, in anything like the proper import of the expression, "written in his heart;" if it were, as Butler says of it, "interwoven in our very nature;" — we might ask, what would be the value of the New Covenant promise? If the law be already there, why engage to write it there?

How, then, it will naturally be asked, comes the Apostle to say of the unenlightened Gentiles, that they "do by nature the things contained by the law," and that, in so doing, they "show the work of the law written in their hearts?" I answer, that if there be a sense in which his words can be understood, that is at once sufficient for the purposes of his present argument, and consistent with his statements elsewhere, this is the sense which ought to be preferred. Now, when he says "the Gentiles, who have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law," it is not necessary to his argument that he be understood as meaning either that they do *all* these things, or that, with regard to *any* of them, the principles from which they are done are such as to render the performance of them truly good and acceptable in God's sight. It is enough for his argument, that, in their conduct, the Gentiles do, in various ways, evince a sense of right and wrong, — convictions in their minds of sin and duty. That they have such convictions, such a sense of right and wrong, is manifest, when, at any time, they pay regard to the claims of humanity, of equity, of natural affection, and of general benevolence, in opposition to the contrary principles of injustice and selfishness.

On the mind and heart the law of God was originally written; and although by the fall the impression of the

divine hand writing has been mournfully defaced, it has never been entirely obliterated. In regard, indeed, to right dispositions, — to the primary principles of godliness, — to true, spiritual, holy desires and affections, the obliteration is complete; no traces of the original characters remaining. But, however entirely the heart may have lost the disposition to keep them, the dictates of law itself have not been thoroughly erased from the mind.

The conceptions of moral good and evil prevalent among the heathen, have been erroneous and debased; and the erroneousness and debasement have originated in the same cause with that to which the Apostle traces their ignorance of God himself. The source of their dislike to "the only true God" was, the opposition of his holy character to the pollution and earthliness of their fallen nature: — and there is surely no room for wonder, that the same depravity should have produced the perversion and the partial oblivion of that law, which is a transcript of his moral perfection. By all such voluntary erasement of the law of God from their hearts, deep guilt has been contracted. But still, as has been said, the original impression is not gone: — and, while they wilfully act in opposition to the sense of right and wrong which is yet in their minds, they continue to "treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath." And that they *do* act thus perversely, the Apostle had before, in the strongest terms, affirmed, — when, after enumerating the abominations prevalent among them, he adds — "Who, knowing the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."

The case, then, stands thus. The Gentiles "have not the law." When, therefore, they are condemned, it cannot be for the violation of a law which they have not. But it must be the violation of *some* law; for "where no law is, there is no transgression." They *have* a law; a law enforced by all that is made known of God in his works and ways, and by all their daily experience of his unwearied goodness. This law is the law of conscience, the natural convictions of right and wrong. The very contrast, however, between the condition of those who "sin without law," and are to "perish without law," and that of those who "sin in the law," and are to be "judged by the law," most convincingly shows, that, in the Apostle's mind, the difference was very material, in extent, and clearness, and certainty, between the dictates of the law of conscience and those of written law, — of the law of nature and the law of revelation. This is evident; and on our present subject it is most important. If, in the present state of human nature, "the work of the law were written on the heart," in the same extent, and with the same clearness and certainty, with which it is delivered in the divine word, not only would the need of revelation be, in this respect, lessened, but the difference in the amount of evil desert and of consequent condemnation and punishment, between those who "sin without law," and those who "sin in the law," would so far be obliterated; — it would cease to be imputable to a difference in the means of knowledge, and would arise entirely from a difference in the kind and amount of motive. But the whole scope of the Apostle's reasoning requires us to consider it as produced by both. In regard to the former, — the knowledge of the divine will, — I am aware of the cause of the difference. It is a criminal cause. The

case is the same with regard to the knowledge of God's will, as it is with regard to the knowledge of God himself. Had men "retained God in their knowledge," there would have been no need for his using additional means to make himself known; and had they retained the knowledge of his will, they would not have required a fresh promulgation of his law. But the knowledge of God, and the knowledge of the will of God, have been alike impaired by the entrance of sin and the blinding power of depravity. The two, indeed, (as hinted in last Lecture,) are so intimately connected, that whatever affects the one must, in a similar way, and to a similar extent, affect the other. It is impossible that there should be a right knowledge of God's will, without a right knowledge of God himself. The law of God being a transcript of his moral character, where there is ignorance of the character, there must be corresponding ignorance of the law. We cannot imagine just impressions of the law co-existing with grossly corrupt and unworthy conceptions of the Lawgiver. There is, we may observe accordingly, in the portraiture of heathenism delineated in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, a perfect correspondence between that part of it which respects the knowledge of God, and that which relates to the conduct of life, — between its *religion* and is *morality*. The former stands thus:

"When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Who changed the truth of

God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever."* The latter is given as follows: — "Forasmuch as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient: being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful; who, knowing the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but have pleasure in them that do them." †

It is true, that, in the last of these verses, the Apostle admits, and even asserts, the knowledge on the part of the perpetrators of the enormities he had enumerated, "that they who commit such things are worthy of death." There remained, unless where conscience was thoroughly seared, natural convictions of right and wrong, along with what may be called traditionary apprehensions of that "death" which "the judgment of God" had originally denounced against transgression. This "judgment of God" men originally "knew," as they also knew God himself. But just as after the entrance of sin, they "did not like to retain God in their knowledge," so neither did they, as they ought to have done, keep in humble and self-controlling remembrance his judicial sentence against evil. They rather chose to cast off all restraint. Instead of "striving against sin," they strove to

* Rom. i. 21—23, 25. † Verses 28—32.

rid themselves of every check to the commission of it; and, pouring contempt on the threatenings of heaven, and stifling the forebodings of their own minds, they not only practiced those things which God had forbidden, but delighted in all who would be their associates in rebellion and wickedness.

Summary of the objection to Butler's statements.

There is a sense, then, let it be observed, in which I am far from objecting, either to the phraseology of Butler's system, or to the principle which the phraseology involves, — that virtue consists in living "according to nature." What we are accustomed to call the *natural* state of man, is, in truth, the most *unnatural* the mind can conceive: — inasmuch as there can be nothing more directly at variance with the essential and immutable *nature of things*, than that an intelligent creature should be in a state of alienation from his Creator. But you will at once perceive, that, whenever any such explanation as this is made, there is a departure from the system, and a resolution of it into another, — into that, namely, of essential and eternal fitnesses. For then, "living according to nature" comes to signify, not living according to the *nature of man* as it now is, but according to the general *nature of things*. Between these two, — the nature of things and the nature of man, there was at his creation an unjarring harmony. There was a perfect fitness in his nature to the relations in which he stood to his Maker: — so that then, acting according to his own nature was the same thing as acting according to the essential nature of things. — Now, the fault which, with all diffidence, I am disposed to find with Butler is this, — that he professes to take human nature as it is, expressly deducing the principles of his theory from its present phenomena, — while yet

his "following nature," as his definition of virtue, does not actually mean following it in its present degenerate state, but according to the right order and legitimate subordination of its various principles, — which is the same thing, in other words, with following it according to its original, divinely imparted constitution, — I grant him the correctness of his distinction between *power* and *right*. No more in the constitution of human nature than in the constitution of human society, is the former the legitimate standard of the latter. There is, unquestionably, amongst principles of action, a distinction, in nature and kind, quite independent of their relative strength and actual prevalence. A usurper may depose a rightful sovereign; but the superiority of his power does not transfer to him the right to rule, or impart legitimacy to his usurpation. So may a principle of action gain the ascendant in power, while it has not the ascendant in right. Its power may be that of the usurper. And I am aware that of Butler's theory the very fundamental principle is to be found in this distinction. To follow nature, according to that theory, is not to obey *strength*, but *right*; not to yield subjection to whatever principle happens, at the time, to have the superiority in *power*, but to those which have the legitimate and permanent superiority in *kind*. The distinction is just and important: — but still, "following nature" in this sense, is not following it according to its present degeneracy, but according to its original rectitude.

In stating the different senses of the word *nature*, the Bishop himself writes, — "Nature is frequently spoken of as consisting of those passions which are strongest, and most influence the actions; which, being vicious ones, mankind are in this sense naturally vicious, or vicious

by nature. Thus St. Paul says of the Gentiles, who were 'dead in trespasses and sins, and walked according to the spirit of disobedience,' that they were 'by nature the children of wrath.' They could be no otherwise *children of wrath* by nature, than they were *vicious* by nature."* — This is the second of three acceptations of the word which he mentions; and it is this especially (the first being of little immediate consequence to our present subject) that is contrasted by him with the third, or that sense of it according to which the Gentiles "do *by nature* the things contained in the law," "show the work of the law written in their hearts," "are a law unto themselves."

Every one, however, must instantly be sensible, in how very limited a meaning of the terms they who are "vicious by nature" can be said to "do by nature the things contained in the law;" — or those in whom "vicious passions are strongest, and most influence the actions," to "show the work of the law written in their hearts." Yet with the same limitation, it is manifest, must they be understood to be "a law unto themselves." They have, from nature and tradition, such a sense of right and wrong, as to constitute a ground of responsibility: — and, moreover, the degree in which this is deficient or perverted, is owing to the power and prevalence of a depraved disposition of heart, and is, therefore, on the same account as forgetfulness and ignorance of God, in itself criminal. "Following nature," therefore, is not following nature as it *is*, but following it as it *was*, and as it *ought to be*: — it is obeying, not the power that is actually dominant, but the power that bore the sway originally,

* Serm. II.

and whose deposition from rightful authority is the result and evidence of man's apostasy from God.

"If," says Butler, "we are constituted such sort of creatures, as from our very nature to feel certain affections or movements of mind upon the sight or contemplation of the meanest inanimate part of the creation, for the flowers of the field have their beauty: certainly there must be something due to him himself who is the Author and Cause of all things, who is more intimately present to us than anything else can be, and with whom we have a nearer and more constant intercourse than we can have with any creature; there must be some movements of mind and heart which correspond to his perfections, or of which those perfections are the natural objects."*

If such language be meant to express the sentiment, that as, by the present constitution of our nature, the sight of the inanimate objects of creation awakens emotions corresponding to their beauty, their sublimity, or their other qualities, so does the contemplation of the perfections of Deity actually give rise in our bosoms to suitable feelings and affections towards him; can any representation be more at variance with those of the inspired Apostle? If, on the contrary, the representation be merely theoretical, implying no more than that there is the same *natural fitness* in the character of Deity to produce in the heart of an intelligent creature the sentiments of fear and love, as there is fitness in the beauties of creation to excite the feelings of admiration and pleasure, — its truth will not be questioned; but its inapplicability must be manifest, to human nature in its present state, as described in Scripture, and exhibited in fact.

* Pref. to Serm. p. viii.

If we admit the doctrine that "enmity against God" is the essential character of fallen humanity, we can only consider the fact that, whilst "from our very nature" we are conscious of movements of mind corresponding to the sights and sounds of inanimate creation, there is so mournful a contrariety between the state of our hearts towards God and the affections which his character is really fitted to inspire, as the most striking and humiliating exemplification that could well be presented of our nature's moral degeneracy. There *is*, beyond all question, a fitness in the attributes of the Godhead to engender in our bosoms the sentiments of affectionate fear and reverential love; a fitness not less real or less perfect than the fitness of sublimity to awaken awe, or of beauty to inspire admiration. That these sentiments are *not* engendered, — that the infinite concentration of all excellence is in fact, on the contrary, the object of aversion; — this is what constitutes the very essence of our moral debasement and guilt. What is "*due* to Him who is the Author and Cause of all things" is one consideration; what is *actually rendered* to him is another. It is not from the former but from the latter alone that the present state of human nature is to be determined. That which *was* due and that which *was* rendered, were originally the same; that which *is* due and that which *is now* rendered are precisely opposite; forgetfulness for remembrance, irreverence for fear, enmity for love!

Suppose, then, all to be admitted for which Dr. Butler contends with regard to the obviously designed supremacy of conscience in the constitution of human nature; — still, if this original constitution has been deranged; if other principles have gained the ascendency; and if this ascendency of the inferior principles over the superior is

not maintained in contrariety to the will or disposition of the nature in which the usurpation has taken place, but, on the contrary, it is the will or disposition itself which has rebelled, and has laid conscience under arrest, so as to silence its voice, and suppress its mandates; how can these voluntary slaves of a self-imposed domination be expected to give forth a fair and impartial statement of the claims and requisitions of the rightful sovereign? How are we to get the law of conscience, with any security of its correctness, from those who are the subjects, by choice, of the law of appetite and passion? — Suppose we had no other source from which to derive our notions of the moral character of God except the moral character of man, taken simply as he now is; should we, on the principle of judging of an author by his works, be able to deduce from the contemplation of the creature the infinite purity and infinite goodness of his Creator? Most assuredly not. In the constitution of man's nature originally, there were the clear and delightful indications of both; but the aspects of his constitution now subject our speculations on such subjects to the most distressing and inextricable perplexity, — a perplexity which the variety of philosophical systems only renders the more confounding and hopeless, and from which nothing can satisfactorily deliver us but the discoveries of revelation.

Difficulties in the phenomena of Providence.

When we take these discoveries along with us, all is consistent. When mankind are regarded as a race of apostate creatures, — the world which they inhabit as a revolted province of God's universal empire, — we have a principle which affords a solution to all the perplexing difficulties that present themselves in the phenomena of providence. In the past history and the present condition of the world, we meet

everywhere with two opposite classes of facts. There are evils endured; there are blessings enjoyed. Without attempting at present to adjust the balance, and to settle the disputed question of their relative proportions, — to determine which of the two preponderates; it is enough for our present purpose to observe, that both the one and the other, in large abundance and endless variety, are incessantly obtruding themselves upon our notice. — In attempting to account for this apparently anomalous state of things, — to find a principle of reconciliation between these opposite and seemingly contradictory sets of facts, we are not satisfied with the Manichean theory, of two contrary presiding principles, of good and evil, of benevolence and malignity, manifesting their respective natures in the exercise of their respective dominions, mutually counterworking each other, contending for the pre-eminence, and alternately prevailing. However naturally such a conception might be supposed to suggest itself to an ignorant mind, we very soon perceive it to be pregnant with demonstrable absurdity. Yet the ordinary philosophical solutions of the difficulty are hardly more satisfactory. According to these, the existence of evil is necessary to a state of *moral probation*, — partial sufferings inseparable from the operation of *general laws*, — and their existence, in the present constitution of things, designed, by the all-wise Author of that constitution, to work out the largest amount of good *on the whole:* — the Sovereign Maker and Ruler having an indisputable right to form such a world, to give being to such an order of creatures as its inhabitants, and to appoint to those creatures such conditions of existence as he saw meet; — no creature having any title to complain of the condition allotted to him, provided the

Unsatisfactory solutions of them

measure of good, either bestowed or placed within his reach, preponderates over the evil; — and disease and death having been admitted into the constitution of our world, as useful and necessary parts of the great system of moral influences, — of modes of trial, and means of improvement. Such theories have long appeared to my mind quite as little satisfactory as the two principles, the light and the darkness, the god and the demon, of Manes. They all proceed on the unscriptural assumption, that the present constitution of things in our world is the one allotted to it by primary and sovereign appointment.

Such is the case, especially, with the ordinary scheme of *moral probation*. However plausible the lights in which it may be placed, — however captivating the attire in which it may be invested, it is the offspring of error, or of very partial views of truth. According to it, physical evils are to be regarded as originally designed, in the general arrangement of the system of divine administration, for the trial and improvement of moral principles. But, according to the statements of Scripture, all physical evil is to be regarded as strictly punitive, — not in any case a sovereign or arbitrary appointment, but a judicial and penal infliction. That moral principles are now tried by it, is true; but this was not the primary purpose of its introduction. There was no suffering, to try the principles of man, in his state of innocence. It is as a sinner that he is a sufferer. He is not now a creature on trial for life, but a criminal under sentence of death. The period of man's *probation*, in the strict acceptation of the term, is past: — it was properly the time of his original innocence. It was then that he was put upon trial, — upon trial for life or death. Such probation there can never be again. Man now,

Scheme of *moral probation*.

while in his natural state, cannot, in strict propriety, be regarded as *upon trial;* inasmuch as there would be implied in this a possible alternative, — namely, that life might still be attained, as well as death incurred, — an alternative which, according to Scripture, was put out of the question by the entrance of sin.

When, under the gracious administration of the gospel, sinners are "renewed in the spirit of their minds," — when by profession they have their places amongst the spiritual children of God, they become again, though not in the same sense as at first, subjects of probation. The principles of the new life are then put upon trial; — they are subjected to practical tests, by which their reality must be evinced, or their hypocrisy detected. But while these principles are thus tried, and by trial improved, — still, the sufferings are not inflicted in sovereignty; they are all deserved. Though corrective, they are still punitive. The very sin which they are designed to remove is, at the same time, their cause. There is displeasure in them as well as love. The scheme of probation to which I am now objecting, is that which appears to forget the true condition of the world as under a curse on account of sin, and represents mankind as if they were even now the subjects of an original constitution, and still probationary candidates for the curse or the blessing. And of this scheme, although with occasional qualifications, which bring it nearer to the representations of Scripture, there is more than a sufficiency in the moral system of Butler.

True solution according to the discoveries of revelation.

But I wish you now to look at those seemingly contradictory phenomena of providence which have been mentioned, and to compare them with the Bible account of the actual condition of man as an apos-

tate subject of God's moral government. It is most interesting and satisfactory to observe, how perfectly this account tallies with the existing appearances. When we look at man himself, at the world which he inhabits, at nature around him, in as far as he comes at all into contact with it, or bears any relation to it, — the scene that presents itself to our view is precisely such as, even *á priori*, we might have anticipated, under the government of such a Being as Deity is in Scripture represented to be, — a Being who is offended, yet kind, — judicially offended, but essentially and unchangeably kind, — retaining unbounded benevolence in the midst of righteous displeasure. Everywhere, and at all times, we are environed with indications of the latter: — and all the variety of suffering is at once and more than accounted for, when it is regarded as the effect and manifestation of offended righteousness, or of the inevitable tendencies of sin under his just and holy administration. All the "ills that flesh is heir to" (would men but rightly consider them) are so many memorials, incessantly reminding them of their being in a fallen state, and of the place of their habitation being under a curse. But then, the very Being by whom the curse has been pronounced is good and gracious: — he has not renounced the kindly tendencies of his nature; he has not divested himself of his infinite benignity; he still "delighteth in mercy." And, accordingly, on which side soever we turn our eyes, ten thousand proofs of this also are before us. While all the calamities which men hear of, and see, and feel, remind them that the Being whom they have offended is holy and just, a hater and a punisher of sin; yet all is not curse. The Sovereign Ruler "woos" his erring creatures by his kindness as well as "awes" them by his judgments:

——— "though woo'd and awed,
Bless'd and chastised, a flagrant rebel still."—YOUNG.

Rebels as we are, we live in the very midst of his munificence. "The earth is full of his riches." "His tender mercies are over all his works." Is not this mingled condition of things, I ask you, precisely what we might expect to find, under the administration of a justly offended, but kind and merciful Being, over a province of his dominions, which, though in a state of unnatural and base revolt, he had not finally proscribed and abandoned?—sin, in ten thousand forms, sending up every instant to the Eternal Throne, from all parts of the world, the call for vengeance, and the inexhaustible and indomitable goodness of Jehovah still lingering to smite, staying the uplifted hand of Justice, and in spite of the desert of punitive retribution, still "kind to the evil and unthankful," still "making the sun to rise and the rain to descend" on the "children of disobedience," filling with good the mouth that, instead of speaking his praise, blasphemes his name, and pouring showers of blessing on the soil that yieids him nothing in return but briers and thorns! But observe, my hearers:—In what is it, according to this representation, that the indications are apparent of the holiness and righteousness of the Supreme Governor? Is it in the moral character of the creature?—in its conformity to that of the Creator? How can it be? That character is evil; and evil in the work can never be the index of good in the maker. The indications of this part of the divine character are rather to be found in the very sufferings which, on account of this evil, are judicially inflicted on the sinning creature. In the character of the creature himself we look in vain for the traces of

the holy purity of his Creator. In his original constitution these traces were marked and prominent; they were not then mere traces indeed, they were the broad lines and distinctive features of his character; but in his nature as fallen, even the traces of purity are lost. It is not there that we can find them; it is in the procedure towards the degenerate creature of the God whom his sins have offended; — in his providence as interpreted by his word, and in the scheme of redemption as there exclusively revealed. And if, I repeat, in the present character of man considered abstractly from the divine conduct towards him, the moral excellence of his Maker is not discernible, — ever fruitless, surely, must be the attempt to extract from the elements of that character a correct delineation of the principles of moral rectitude.

Conscience, indeed as I have before admitted, does still continue, in fallen human nature, as a witness in favor of God and of his law. In the midst of what is wrong, it bears testimony, with various degrees of clearness and force, to what is right. But in the highest department of all, its operation, we have seen, is partial, erroneous, feeble, capricious, ineffectual. And, in addition to this, it should be observed, that the moral character of man consists, properly and directly, in his *dispositions;* not in the decisions of his judgment, but in the inclinations and affections of his heart. Among these, conscience does not at all rank. It has nothing in it, strictly speaking, of moral goodness; its exercise implying no spiritual taste or relish for true virtue, no disposition of mind to delight in its essential beauty. "If," says Edwards, "conscience's approving duty and disapproving sin were the same thing as the exercise of a virtuous principle of the heart in loving duty and hating sin, then remorse of

conscience would be the same thing as repentance; and, just in the same degree as the sinner felt remorse of conscience for sin, in the same degree would his heart be turned from the love of sin to the hatred of it, inasmuch as they are the very same thing." The two things thus distinguished have frequently, it is to be feared, been confounded, — the mere approbation of conscience with the inclination of the will and choice of the heart. But the operation of conscience is compatible with the absence of every vestige of truly moral principle. This is manifest from every day's observation of human character; and there will be the most perfect exemplification of its truth in the place of future woe; where the clearest light of conviction, and the acutest anguish of remorse, will co-exist with the most unsubdued and inveterate alienation of heart from God and goodness. There can be nothing, therefore, in strict propriety of speech, morally good in conscience; else there must be moral goodness in hell. There, surely, although the holiness and righteousness of the Divine Being are apparent in the punishment and remorse of its inhabitants, we should never be warranted in saying that in their *moral character* there is a specimen or exemplification of the purity of his nature. On the same principle, in proportion as men, while on earth, are the subjects of depravity, and destitute of the love of God and the sensibilities of moral rectitude, must it be unreasonable to speak of them as presenting, in their corrupt nature, an exhibition of the holy excellence of their Creator. And although, in the remaining testimony of conscience, "accusing or excusing," approving the exercise of the moral affections and chastening the neglect or violation of them, the Sovereign Ruler "has not left himself without witness," — yet conscience, des-

ignate it as you will, and describe its functions as you will, still, as belonging to a fallen nature, must participate, directly or indirectly, in that nature's alienation from God and goodness, and, on moral subjects, cannot with confidence be depended upon for a sure and consistent deliverance.

It would have been quite relevant to the subject of this discourse, and might even have served to shed upon it a clearer light, to have considered a little more at large, the question, *What is conscience?* The answer to this question, however, will find an equally if not a more suitable place in next Lecture, of which the general subject will be, the Rule of Moral Obligation; and the reservation of it till then will also produce a more convenient division of the two discourses in point of length. I waive it, therefore, for the present, and conclude by simply assuring my hearers, if such assurance be necessary, that I have been anxious to avoid doing any injustice to a writer of such merited celebrity as Dr. Butler; and that, if in aught it shall be brought to my conviction that I have, however unintentionally, misrepresented his sentiments, I shall be most happy to retract and erase the error. May God, the only wise, and the source of whatever deserves the name of wisdom to his creatures, "lead us into all truth;" so that "in his light we may see light!"

LECTURE V.

ON THE RULE OF MORAL OBLIGATION.

1 JOHN III. 4.

"Sin is the transgression of law."

IN the review which has been taken, in former Lectures, I have left unnoticed various systems of morals, with their respective varieties and modifications, partly to avoid repetition and tediousness, and partly because the applicability to them of the general principles which it was my object to establish, is, without particular illustration, sufficiently apparent. — Let us now see whether we can arrive at anything more satisfactory.

I must recall your attention to the distinction, stated in the outset, between the *principle* or *foundation*, and the *rule* or *law*, of moral rectitude. The latter is simply the authoritative direction by which the conduct of the subject of any government is to be regulated; the former is that, whatever it may be, in the prescribed action itself, or in its tendencies and effects, on account of which it is that the governor enjoins it. I shall begin with the consideration of the *rule* or *law*. To some this may appear somewhat preposterous, the order of discussion not being in conformity to the natural order of subsistence; inasmuch as the

Reason for beginning with the *rule* rather than the *principle*.

principle must precede the rule, — and the consideration on account of which a law is enacted, commanding one kind of conduct and prohibiting its opposite, must be prior to the law itself; I prefer this method, however, first, because the law, if I may so express myself, lies nearest to us, and is that with which we have most immediately to do; — and secondly, because, by the consideration and satisfactory settlement of this point, we may be the better prepared for ascending to the higher and more abstruse investigation of the original principles of moral rectitude, the primary and essential elements of virtue.

My feeling on this subject is similar to that which I have ever experienced in regard to another, of a different nature — the decrees of God. On that subject, it has always appeared to me our best and our only legitimate course, not to begin with the purpose, and reason forward to the event, but to begin with the event, and reason backward to the purpose; — renouncing all vain and presumptuous attempts to go back in the first instance into eternity, and to read the mind of Deity in its own light, rather to look to what the Divine Being has done, and thence to ascertain, in all cases in which he has not himself made them previously known, his everlasting counsels. — So, in regard to moral obligation. If, by any legitimate process, we can ascertain the law by which human agency is to be regulated, this may be an assistance to us in our endeavors to trace the eternal principles, if such there be, on which this law is founded. We shall thus pursue a course, not only more becoming the modesty of created intellects, so liable to be bewildered and lost in indefinite abstractions, but at the same time more likely to conduct us to a satisfactory conclusion.

Primary question for ascertaining the rule; whether man be a subject of God's moral government.

With regard, then, to the *rule*, or *standard*, by which human conduct ought to be regulated, and conformity to which is virtue, it appears to me, that there is one fundamental question, the answer to which leads immediately to its determination: — it is the simple question, whether man be indeed a subject of the government of the Deity? — Now, I am not going to enter into any proof, either of the existence of one God, or of his sustaining the character of Moral Ruler of the universe. These are points which I must be permitted to assume, as settled *data*, — points on all hands conceded by those who enter into any discussions on the nature and obligations of virtue. Yet, if the moral government of God be granted, and the consequent subjection of man to that government, it evidently follows, as an instant and unavoidable sequence, without even a single link of intermediate reasoning, that the rule by which his conduct is to be regulated *must be* — THE WILL OF THE SUPREME GOVERNOR. — The question with regard to the way or ways in which that will is made known to his subjects — how they are put in possession of the rule or law — is quite a distinct inquiry. As a general and primary principle, it is to my mind axiomatically evident, that the rule or law of the subject's conduct can be nothing else than a declaration, in what way soever imparted, of the will of the sovereign Ruler. The The two propositions, indeed, that *man is a subject of the Divine Governor*, and that *the will of the Divine Governor is his law*, I cannot but regard as of identically the same import. If there be a God, and if man, as a moral and responsible agent, be the subject of his government,

If he be, the will of the supreme Governor must be his rule.

I confess myself unable to imagine any answer but one to the question, What is the rule by which he is to act, and by which he is to be tried? — the answer, namely, which has just been given — *the supreme will.* I have no idea of arriving at this conclusion by a circuitous process of argumentation. The evidence of it seems to me to be involved in the evidence of the divine existence. If there be a God, he must rule; and if he rules, his will must be law.

The higher inquiry, — what it is by which that will itself is determined, — is not the question for the creature, considered simply as a subject of God's dominion. The difference, in this respect, must be very manifest, between the divine government and all the governments of men. In the latter, the subjects may have a voice in the framing of their own laws. This indeed is the case in all governments, where any portion is enjoyed of the precious blessing of liberty; — absolute power being more than can safely be entrusted to any hands but those of the Divine Being himself; — perilous even in the hands of an unfallen and sinless creature; and, in those of a creature whose nature is under the sway of corrupt principles and passions, one of the most tremendous of the curses of offended Heaven. But the government of the Most High God it were impiety even to think of as otherwise than uncontrollably absolute. There is no will superior to the divine; and the very imagination, however transiently admitted into the mind, that any of his subjects should have aught to say in determining the laws by which they are to be bound and tried, would be nameless presumption. — Under any other government than his, we cannot too strongly deprecate the idea of the will of the govern-

or being law; but under his, whence but from himself can the law be conceived to come?*

All legitimate inquiries respecting the *rule*, should relate to the *means of ascertaining the Divine will.*

To me, then, it appears, that, in all theories of morals, in as far as the law or rule of duty is concerned, the only legitimate inquiry is — what is the true way, or (if there be more sources of information than one) what are the true ways, of ascertaining, with certainty and correctness, the will of the Supreme Legislator? When, on this part of the subject, these theories attempt anything else than a satisfactory answer to this question; — when they proceed, or seem at all to proceed, upon the assumption that a law may possibly exist and be discovered, — whencesoever the discovery may be sought — superior to this will, and independent of it; — I can regard them in no other light than as founded upon a basis of atheism.

If these principles be at all correct, — and to me they appear entitled to rank amongst *first truths*, self-evident elementary principles, — it must follow, that in any subject of God's moral government virtue *must* consist in conformity to this will. Recollect, I am not now speaking of the *foundation* of moral rectitude, or of the question (whether we be competent to find an answer to it or not) why is the divine will what it is? I am speaking solely of the *rule* or *law of duty* for his dependent and accountable creatures. And in this view, it is not only our safest ground, — it is our only legitimate and reasonable ground, — that the virtue or moral rectitude of a

* It has been beautifully said by Dr. Clarke, "Governing according to *law and reason*, and governing according to *will and pleasure*, are on earth the two most opposite forms of government; while in heaven, they are nothing but two different names for one and the same thing."

subject of God's moral government consists in conformity of principle and conduct, of heart and life, to the will of the Governor; a Governor who is necessarily supreme, and whose will, to all his intelligent creatures, is infallible and unimpeachable law.

Statements of Scripture.

That such is the light in which this subject is invariably represented in the Scriptures, no reader of them, how superficial soever, can fail to perceive. The comparison of the words of our text with three other statements equally brief, will bring out, clearly and summarily, the doctrine of revelation on this interesting point. The statement of our text is, that "*sin is the transgression of law.*" This, then, is the Bible definition of sin, or moral evil. The other statements, analogous to this and arising out of it, are Rom. iv. 15, — "*Where no law is, there is no transgression;*" Rom. v. 13, — "*Sin is not imputed where there is no law;*" and Rom. iii. 20, — "*By the law is the knowledge of sin.*" These four short sentences, or Scripture aphorisms, when connected together, present a view as clear as it is concise, of the divine mind respecting the rule of moral duty and moral responsibility to man. If "sin is the transgression of law," the consequence is immediate, that, law and transgression being correlates, where there is no law there can be no transgression of law, and consequently no sin; — that where there is no sin there can be no imputation of sin, no guilt, no condemnation, no punishment; and that, in proportion to our knowledge of the law of which sin is the transgression, must be our knowledge of the amount of sin in ourselves, or in others; nor can there, on the part of the creature, be any knowledge of sin at all, but in as far as the law is known of which sin is the transgression. And, what is most immediately to our present purpose,

the passages cited, which are only a brief statement of principles that pervade the whole volume of revelation, teach us the lesson, that sin is not *by us* to be sought for in contrariety to any abstract principles of right and wrong, — principles, which it is necessary for us, before we can know wherein and to what extent we have erred, to investigate and discover: — it is simply "the transgression of law," — that is, I need hardly say, of the law of God. And, in conformity with this representation, sin and disobedience, sinners and the disobedient, are, throughout the Scriptures, invariably employed as designations of interchangeable use, because of synonymous meaning. And, on the grounds already very briefly adverted to, this appears to be not only the dictate of Scripture, but, as every dictate of Scripture must equally be, the sound philosophy of the case; inasmuch as the philosophy that would attempt to go above God on the one hand, or, on the other, to frame a law for his creatures independently of him, we must, in either case, pronounce unworthy of the name, and lay it under reprobation, as only the proud presumption of "science falsely so called."

Question as to the manner of discovering the Divine will.

The inquiry, then, which next presents itself for our consideration, relates to the manner in which the Divine will is made known. How do men obtain acquaintance with the rule or law by which their conduct is to be regulated and tried? Has the Divine Governor given to the human race any full and infallible discovery of it? To this question I answer at once, with all confidence, leaving the objections and sneers of philosophy to be afterwards disposed of, — *He has; — and it is to be found in the volume of divine revelation.* This we affirm to be the only complete and absolutely sure discovery of

Answer to the question, and to the principal objection to the answer.

the mind and will of the Divine Being to man. The answer may seem a very common-place one; but I am satisfied it is the only one in accordance with truth. I am aware of the special exception put in against it by philosophers, — that nothing can be acknowledged as the rule or standard of virtue to mankind, with which so limited a portion of mankind are acquainted. The standard, they allege, must be something universal, — something of which all men are equally in possession, or to which, at least, all have equal access; it being unreasonable to suppose, that the law, by which all are to be tried, should be a law known only to a few. The objection, I grant, is a very natural one, and one which, stated in such a form, appears insuperable: for how is it possible, that a book should be the standard of duty to the millions of men into whose hands it has never come? A little attention, however, to the true state of the case will not only remove the difficulty, but will serve still further to show, on how many points, in our investigation of such subjects, the doctrine, formerly adverted to, of the fallen condition of man, is found to bear. This, I repeat, and repeat most emphatically, is the fundamental article of difference between the philosophy of the schools and the philosophy of the Bible, — between the science of the wise men of this world, and the divine science of Prophets and Apostles, — that *man is not now what he originally was.*

All the great difficulties on the subject under discussion, and the one which I have now mentioned among the rest, will be found, with hardly perhaps a single exception, to resolve themselves into this one point. Let us look at the case. We are accustomed to say, in terms before adverted to, that the law of God was originally

written on man's heart. The expression is figurative; but the figure is quite sufficiently intelligible and explicit. We mean by it, that, along with a perfect knowledge of the character of his Maker (perfect, that is, in *kind*, for to be perfect in *degree* it must have been infinite) and a corresponding knowledge of his will, as arising out of that character and in conformity to it, he had also in regard to the divine will, a perfect disposition to do it, — a perfect accordance, in all his inclinations, with the principles of rectitude, as subsisting in that infinite nature, in the image of which his own had been formed. The manner in which his mind possessed its information of the will of God, upon which the disposition developed itself, we may not be able distinctly to apprehend. From the very change that has passed upon the moral constitution of our nature, and our consequent total want of experience of the consciousnesses of a sinless soul, the particular mode of Divine intimation to the mind of the first man may to us be in some degree a secret. But it is enough for us to know, that he possessed a full and intuitive discernment of right, and that the perception of duty and the delight in it were, in the very constitution of his nature, inseparable, — subsisting there in unjarring and blessed harmony; — no discrepancy between the dictates of the understanding and the desires of the heart, — the illumination of the one, and the warmth of the other, ever in unison and in proportion, blending together, like the rays of light and the rays of heat flowing in undistinguishable combination, from the same sun. The principles of rectitude were perfect in his soul, and the influence of them was perfect in his life.

But man (the same inspired record informs us *how*) fell from this state of pristine purity and bliss. He sinned;

and his nature, in consequence, became degenerate, destitute of its original holy sensibilities, — of that perfect love of God, which, in its original constitution, was the essential element of all moral goodness, being itself a complacent delight in infinite untainted excellence, by which the derived purity of the creature held the most intimate communion with the underived purity of the Creator — the happy soul filling itself with joy from the exhaustless "fountain of life." Enmity having taken the place of this love, the spring of moral purity in the heart having become polluted, the conduct of man in regard to the original law of duty, underwent a most material change. Not that there was any alteration, either in the principles and requirements of the law itself, or in the obligations of the subject to render to it a full obedience; — the change related to the state of his knowledge of the law, as that knowledge was affected by the disposition of his heart towards it. In consequence of the latter, the former became dark, confused, and uncertain. No longer the object of complacency and holy desire, it was in danger either of entire expulsion from the mind, or of mutilation and corruption, through the influence of earthly appetites and depraved affections in biasing and perverting the judgment.

Did philosophers believe what divine revelation testifies, with regard to the difference between the original and the present condition of man, they would at once perceive, that, had man continued what he was at his creation, the difficulty regarding the universality of the rule of moral rectitude could never have arisen; it would have been all along universal, and by all the members of the human family perfectly understood, perfectly approved, perfectly loved, and perfectly practiced; and that the con-

trary of all this, the sad result of the entrance of sin, has been the very cause which rendered the revelation necessary. The loss of the knowledge of God himself, of whose moral nature the law was a fair transcript on the heart of his holy creature, has been owing entirely to moral causes; and, in as far as it exists, the loss of the knowledge of his will has had the same origin. Both the one and the other belong to man's indictment as a transgressor. Instead of telling in his favor as an apology for his sins, they stand against him as leading counts, among the charges of his guilt.

We cannot admit the view which some have taken of revelation, as if it were no more than a republication of the law of nature, — even understanding by the law of nature the law written on man's heart in his pristine innocence. The revelation contained in the Scriptures is addressed to men as sinners against God; and its grand design is, not to make known the way of obedience, but to make known the way of recovery from a state of disobedience, — of restoration, by pardon of sin and renovation of heart, to the forfeited favor and the lost image of God. Still, however, the law is there. It is there for the purpose of convincing men of sin and showing them their need of mercy; and it is there, as the rule of life to those by whom the mercy revealed in the gospel is accepted. Its uses are, to constrain men, by a right view of their exigencies, to believe, and then to regulate the life of the believer. But, since there cannot be two laws, — two different rules of duty, — the moral law of revelation is the same with the moral law in the heart of the first man; and so far this department of revelation may be allowed to be a republication of the law of nature. The special discoveries of the gospel present new and peculiar

motives to obedience, — motives which make their appeal to the obligations under which saved sinners lie to the mercy that has saved them. But in the great principles of moral rectitude, revelation makes no change; and the specialities of duty which it inculcates will be found no more than the modified exercise, — the exercise modified by the circumstances in which men are placed by the gospel, — of those great principles.

When, therefore, against revelation being admitted as the standard of rectitude and the rule of moral duty to man, the objection is urged that revelation is not universal, the objector forgets that the principles of virtue contained in revelation are the same with the principles of virtue as originally subsisting and operating in the human heart; and that the sole reason why these principles are not universal, is the fallen and guilty state of man. It is man's own blame, therefore, that they are otherwise. There lay upon the righteous Governor no obligation to republish them, — to give to creatures, in a state of voluntary alienation from himself, an inspired and accredited manifestation of his will; and where there was no obligation to give it at all, there could be no obligation to make it universal. The fact of the limited diffusion of revelation may be pleaded by philosophers, if they will, among the considerations which throw doubt on its pretended authority; — it may be introduced among the objections to its claims. But, on the supposition that this and other objections are overruled, and that the contrary evidence — the evidence in favor of revelation — is found sufficient to establish those claims; — then the fact in question, on whatever principles we account for it, by whatever considerations we remove or mitigate the mystery that envelopes it cannot, with any shadow of fairness, be pleaded

as a reason for excluding it, *when* thus authenticated, from being received as the true standard of morals; the true standard, because containing a discovery of the same will, which formed the inward law of man's original innocence.

I cannot, however, as we pass along, resist the temptation to dwell, for a few moments longer, on the fact just adverted to, that this new discovery of the will of God as the law of duty to man, is not the only, nor indeed the chief part and purpose of the revelation. Had it been a mere republication of the law, unaccompanied by any provision, either for the remission of human guilt, or for the restoration to human nature of the principles of obedience, might it not with justice have been regarded as a curse rather than a blessing? For, in these circumstances, what alone could have been its effect? If the maxim be true, that "by the law is the knowledge of sin," the clearer discovery of the rule of duty could have answered no other end than to bring before the mind of every sinner that obtained it the fuller view of the amount of his guilt; — to muster in more appalling array before his conscience, the host of his trespasses; — and, by augmenting his consciousness of delinquency, at once to aggravate his present distress, and deepen the gloom of his prospective terrors: — and, while it offered no means of pardon, and consequently imparted no hope, what *moral* effect could be expected to arise from the explicit manifestation of the law, in all the extent of its requisitions and sanctions, while the heart was allowed to remain in its native and acquired hostility to its principles? — what effect, but to awaken a suspicion of cruel vindictiveness on the part of the Lawgiver, as a being who, in such a publication, could have no other end in view than to

"torment before the time" the objects of his threatened wrath; to exasperate, by such suspicion, the virulence of the inborn enmity against him; and, in a frightful extent, to realize that indignant spurning of restraint, and scorn and defiance of the barriers of authority, which is mentioned by the Apostle as one of the characteristic tendencies of human depravity, — "Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence?"

But, as I have said, the mere exhibition of law is not the object of divine revelation. Law, it is true, *is* exhibited; the will of God is disclosed; — the principles and requirements of divine morality are authoritatively stated; and the terrific sanctions are announced, by which they are guarded. But all this is merely in subserviency to the main design. That design is a design of mercy. It is to restore fallen immortals, for the perpetuity of their being, to their forfeited honor and happiness, to the divine favor and to the divine likeness; — and, while it sets forth anew, in all its fullness and peremptoriness of the demands, the primitive standard of morals, to recommend and enforce conformity to it by such new exhibitions of the character of God, in all its holy sublimity and attractive loveliness, as are divinely fitted at once to awe and to win the froward heart.

Condition, on the principles laid down in this answer, of those who are destitute of revelation.

It will very reasonably be asked, what, in regard to responsibility, is the condition of those who have not this revelation? — Their responsibility, we say in reply, must of course correspond to the means they possess of acquaintance with the rule of duty. We have seen it affirmed in this revelation itself, that "sin is the transgression of law," and that "where no law is, there is no transgression."

Have *they*, then, *no law?* If they had not, it would follow, that they could have no sin, and could not be the subjects of any sentence of condemnation. I cannot task your patience with any repetition of what was advanced on this subject in last Lecture, when we were commenting on the theory of Dr. Butler. A few additional sentences must suffice.

Under the administration of the same divine Ruler, it is manifest, as already hinted, that there can be only one moral law for the whole community of mankind. Right and wrong, in their great essential principles and requirements, do not vary with climate, locality, condition, or time. They are the same to all. The difference in regard to responsibility, wheresoever it exists, does not arise from a difference in the law, but from a difference in the means and opportunities of knowing it, and in the nature and amount of motives by which it is enforced. This is the principle laid down by the divine Author of Christianity: — "That servant who knew his Lord's will, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not," (that is, had not the same means and the same measure of knowledge, for the absence of *all* knowledge and all means of knowledge would have nullified accountableness,) "and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes:" — and the same is the principle of the passage in the Epistle to the Romans formerly adverted to — "As many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law." Men shall be judged and punished, that is, according to their means of knowing God's will; they who enjoy the written law, or revelation of that will, having a heavier load of guilt, and a propor-

tionally severer verdict, than those who have not possessed this privilege.

That the law of revelation, and the law of nature and conscience, are substantially the same, the context of the passage last cited clearly implies: — "When the Gentiles, who have not the law," (the written law,) "do by nature things contained in the law," (the same written law,) "these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves," — not certainly a law different from the other, but the same law, known in another way, and in an inferior degree. — For the degree in which the Gentiles knew not *God*, "they were without excuse," because the means of knowing him were sufficient, had there been a right disposition or state of heart. For the degree in which they knew not *the will of God*, they were in like manner without excuse, because the means of knowing it were also sufficient, had there been a right disposition or state of heart. Their ignorance both of God and of his will, and their practical atheism and wickedness of character rendered revelation necessary, though in no respect a boon which they were entitled to claim. It was criminal ignorance, containing in it not only no ground of title to privilege, but no excuse for disobedience. Springing from moral causes, it had itself in it the evil of its source.

Sum of the preceding answer.

The sum of all this is: — that man was originally in full possession of the knowledge of the divine will, as the rule or law of duty, and that a disposition in accordance with this will was (if I may so express myself) inwoven with the very texture of his moral constitution: — that in this his original state, the dictates of conscience might, with unhesitating assurance, hav been taken as the test and standard of moral rectitude: —

that since, by throwing off his allegiance, man became a sinful creature, the knowledge of his Maker's will has not been entirely obliterated, but, in consequence of the obliteration of the disposition to do it, has become so sadly defaced and confused in its characters and impressions, that, although it still leaves him, as a subject of moral government, intelligent and accountable, it has been rendered, as a standard of right and wrong, incompetent and unsatisfactory, itself requiring to be rectified: — that the Holy Scriptures, coming from the same Being who was the Author at first of man's moral nature, are, with respect to the rule of duty, in precise harmony with the dictates of conscience in that nature, in its state of primitive innocence, — the law in the book being the same as the law then in the heart: — and that the way to bring mankind back to the knowledge of the original law, and to correct the dictates of a depraved and erring CONSCIENCE, is to put them in possession of this divine document.

Nature and functions of CONSCIENCE.

I have said little hitherto about the nature of CONSCIENCE. A few observations in answer to the questions, What is it? and What are its peculiar functions? may perhaps serve to throw some additional light on preceding speculations; — and may, especially, tend to show how it is, that, being liable to the biasing influence of the depraved dispositions of the heart, its testimony on the present subject is not infallible, — not, by any means, to be taken, without reserve. On this subject, then, I may be permitted, in the first instance, to cite a paragraph or two from Discourses, published several years ago, on the important topic on which we have now been slightly touching, the responsibility of

the heathen. I am the rather desirous to introduce this citation, because the statements which it contains have, to a certain degree, been misapprehended, and require a little additional explication.

"I have often," it is there said, — "I have often, for my own part, in thinking of this subject, been at a loss to conceive what *conscience* can include in it, beyond the exercise of the *judgment* in the particular department of morals. Even those who speak of it as if it were something different, or something more, are at the same time accustomed to use language about it, that will hardly apply to it in any other view. They employ the common phrases. They speak of the *decisions* of conscience; — of conscience being well or ill *informed;* and of these decisions being more or less *enlightened* and *just*, according to the information it possesses. When we speak of the pain which an awakened conscience inflicts, — what more do we mean than the pain which arises from the conviction, brought home to the mind, of our having done wrong? The pain will be various in degree, according to the clearness and force of this conviction; according to the apprehension which the mind has of the intrinsic evil of sin in general, and of the nature and circumstantial aggravations of the particular transgression. The consciousness of the wrong done is not the pain, but the cause of the pain. When the Apostle Paul says, — 'Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world;' he does not mean to identify the *testimony* and the *joy*, but by a common mode of speech, to assign the one as the cause of the other. In the same way, it was the testimony of conscience in Felix, — it was the

conviction, forced upon his judgment, of the enormity of his crimes, that made him 'tremble' under the faithful warnings of the preacher of 'righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.' The consciousness was not the trembling, nor the fear which the trembling indicated; it was the cause of both.

"We speak of *conscience slumbering;* and we oppose to this figurative phrase that of an *awakened conscience.* We mean by the former, that when the disposition to evil hurries on a person in a course of worldliness and vice, the mind is kept from thinking; reflection and anticipation are alike repressed; there is no alarm, because there is no considerate thought; and this banishment of thought, which at first might require an effort and the use of various subsidiary means, becomes itself habitual by the influence of the progressive habit of evil-doing. The conscience, again, is awakened, when, by any alarming event, or powerful pleading, or whatever else may have the tendency to rouse, the mind is startled, and made to think; the claims of religion and virtue, of God and of the soul, are forced upon its notice; the infatuation and the damning tendency of sin, and the awful certainties of death and judgment, and eternity, are, in spite of its natural and contracted unwillingness to think of them, pressed upon its view. And the vividness of the consequent emotions will correspond with the clearness of the mind's perceptions, and the strength of its convictions and impressions. It must be obvious, however, that if there be any one case in which the judgment is in danger of being perverted by the disposition or inclination, — of having its dictates biased or silenced, — it is in matters of moral right and wrong; where duty presents itself under the aspect of the effort and pain of self-denial, and

its opposite under that of the ease and pleasure of self-indulgence. It is thus that conscience is tampered with, and its remonstrances overcome. It discharges its functions as a *punisher* of evil, much more efficiently than as a *preventer;* chastising by subsequent remorse, more frequently than it hinders by previous restraint. But whether this simple view of the nature of conscience, as a modification of the judging faculty, or rather as that faculty itself exercised in a special department, — be correct or not, the argument of the Apostle is not in the least affected by either its soundness or its error. Whatever view we take of it, and by whatever name we call it, its office is to bear inward testimony to the good or the evil of our thoughts, and words, and actions."

In this simple view of conscience, as the exercise of the judgment in the department of morals, I seem to be supported by the authority of the eminent prelate, on whose moral system I have, in a former Lecture, been venturing to comment: — "There is," says Bishop Butler, "a principle of reflection in men, by which they distinguish between, approve and disapprove, their own actions. We are plainly constituted such sort of creatures, as to reflect upon our own nature. The mind can take a view of what passes within itself, its propensions, aversions, passions, affections, as respecting such objects, and in such degrees; and of the several actions consequent thereupon. In this survey it approves of one, and disapproves of another, and towards a third is affected in neither of these ways, but is quite indifferent. This principle in man, by which he approves or disapproves his heart, temper, and actions, is CONSCIENCE: for this is the strict sense of the word, though sometimes it is used so as to take in more."*

* Sermon I.

It appears sufficiently obvious, that, to constitute a "principle of reflection," there is no occasion for any faculty additional to the understanding or judgment. "*Reflecting* upon our own conduct;" — "*taking a survey* of what passes within the mind, its propensions, aversions, passions, and affections," and of "the actions consequent thereupon;" — "*distinguishing* between them; — *approving* one and *disapproving* another;" — are all evidently intellectual or judicial acts. The Bishop, indeed, speaks of conscience as if it were a distinct "principle" in man; but in the description which he thus gives of its functions, there is nothing to which the judgment is not perfectly competent. He intimates that the term is sometimes used in a looser sense, as "taking in more;" but he conceives the "strict' cceptation of it to be exhausted in his description. It *has* by many been regarded as "taking in more." Yet, if we set aside the idea of a *moral sense* in the strict acceptation of the term, as used by Dr. Hutcheson, the differences will be found to be more about the proper use of words than about the actual operations of the mind, — to be questions more of nomenclature than of truth.

To the view given of conscience as being no more than "judgment exercised in the department of moral duty," it has been objected, by a sound moralist and an acute metaphysician, that, "the operations of conscience are confined to ourselves," whereas, "the faculty of judgment includes others within the range of its decisions." "My judgment," says Dr. Payne, "pronounces the conduct of a friend to be wrong, but it cannot be said that my conscience condemns him." This is perfectly true. But it ought, in such a discussion, to be previously understood, that, when we speak of conscience, we are speaking of

what has for its proper province *our own* conduct: and the the only question is, whether it includes more than the exercise and decision of judgment *within that province.* A simple analogy may illustrate this. It is by sight and touch that I acquire a knowledge of the form and features of my own person; — it surely does not follow, that there must be something more than sight and touch to give me this knowledge, because it is by sight and touch that I acquire also a knowledge of the forms and features of the persons of others. In like manner, it does not follow from its being "my judgement that pronounces the conduct *of a friend* to be wrong," that it must be something more than my judgment that pronounces *my own* conduct to be wrong.

The correctness of the analogy is not impaired by the mere circumstance of our having a peculiar term to express the exercise of judgment in the all-important department of our own conduct, while we have none for the observation of our own persons. To offer such an objection is, as I have said, to reduce the question to one of mere nomenclature; to one that respects, not the true mental process, but the proper definition of a word in our vocabulary. The importance of the former is incomparably greater than that of the latter. And, in regard to the former, it appears to me that there exists little if any difference between the view I have given of conscience, and that which is taken by Dr. Payne himself. I am incapable of discovering any material discrepancy between the actual process of mind, as described by him, and as described by me: — "When we speak of the pain," I have said, "which an awakened conscience inflicts, what more do we mean than the pain which arises from the conviction, brought home to the mind, of our having done

wrong? The consciousness of the wrong is not the pain, but the cause of the pain." "Remorse," says Dr. Payne, "is that dreadful feeling of self-accusation and condemnation, which arises upon the retrospect of our guilt. — It is combined with, or presupposes, a perception of criminality, and consequently a knowledge of the standard by which actions are weighed; but remorse itself is, strictly speaking, the vivid feeling of regret and self-condemnation, which is consequent upon this intellectual state of mind:" and again, — "By an original law of the mind, self-approbation or self-condemnation arises, as an individual conceives himself innocent or guilty, whether that conviction be "well or ill-founded." Between these representations, and "the pain which arises from the conviction, brought home to the mind, of our having done wrong," I am unable to discern any more than a verbal difference. Substantially, the statements are the same.

The mental process, therefore, being precisely alike, it comes, as I have said, to be a question of nomenclature merely, — whether the term conscience should be used to signify the faculty which decides upon the right or wrong of the action; or to denote the susceptibility of the consequent emotion, — of what Dr. Payne denominates moral regret on the one hand, and moral gladness on the other; or whether it should not be inclusive of both. What I have said of it proceeds on the first of these views; Dr. Payne adopts the second, defining conscience to be "the susceptibility of experiencing those emotions of approbation or of disapprobation and condemnation, which are awakened by a retrospect of the moral demerit, or the moral excellence, of our own conduct." According to this definition, conscience has nothing to do with the previous decision on the right or wrong of our

conduct: — that is a matter of judgment; and conscience is only the susceptibility of consequent emotions.* I have, on the other hand, regarded conscience as the determining faculty, — the faculty that decides on the right or the wrong of our conduct; and, on this assumption, have identified it with judgment. I cannot think it right to exclude from the province of conscience the determining of right and wrong: I may, at the same time, be in error, in limiting its province to this alone. — Perhaps the *third* of the views mentioned, which considers conscience as partaking of both, — including the faculty of determining, and the susceptibility of pleasurable or painful emotions, may be nearer to correctness than either, being more in accordance with all the customary phraseology respecting its operations. — But this difference, allow me to repeat, about the application of a term, makes no difference as to the actual mental process. That is, in all cases, the same. All that I would be understood to mean is, that there is no need for multiplying our faculties; and that, in the operation of conscience, *when considered as the determiner of right and wrong*, there is nothing more than an exercise of judgment upon our own conduct. We judge ourselves to have done right, or to have done wrong; and we experience the feelings accordingly, of self-satisfaction, or of remorse. — These feelings (as formerly stated) are not the conviction, but the effects or results of the conviction.

There are certain feelings which naturally arise from a right or a wrong course when adopted by us in other

* Sir James Mackintosh says, in coincidence with this view, "Judgment and reason are therefore preparatory to conscience, not properly a part of it." — *Prel. Diss.* p. 393. — Notes and Illustrations, Note I.

departments, which, although in some points essentially different, are yet so far akin as to afford an illustration sufficiently appropriate to our present purpose. We set about the construction, I shall suppose, of some machine; we expend upon it no inconsiderable amount of thought, and time, and labor, and expense; and when it is finished and brought to the trial, it turns out a failure. We immediately discover, that the failure is owing to our having overlooked the application of a particular principle, and that principle, it may be, a very simple and obvious one. The discovery of this omission is of course an act of the understanding. We judge ourselves to have acted *stupidly*. We are instantly conscious of corresponding emotions. We are ashamed; we are angry with ourselves; we feel a painful regret for the loss, not only of time, labor, and expense, but of professional reputation, which we have incurred; and, if we have it not in our power to remedy the failure, our self-reproaches are proportionally bitter, and our lamentations vehement.

Now, I grant the difference to be essential between the regret that arises from an intellectual error, and the remorse consequent upon a moral delinquency, but the difference lies rather in the things themselves by which the feelings, respectively, are produced, than in the mental process regarding them. In the one case, I *judge* myself to have acted *stupidly;* in the other, I *judge* myself to have acted *immorally:*—in the one case I judge myself to have violated, with a senseless inadvertency, the principles of *mechanical science;* in the other, I judge myself to have transgressed, with a reprehensible selfishess, the principles of *moral obligation:*— in the one case, I am sensible of exposure to certain effects which are painfully injurious to my interest and to my reputation amongst

men; in the other, of exposure to certain effects arising from my responsibility, not to men merely, but to God. Is there, in the two cases, any material diversity in the order of mental operations? Or is there any greater difficulty, in understanding the cause or origin of the pain in the one case, than that of the pain in the other? In both cases, is not the conviction of error an operation of the judgment? — and in both cases, is not the pain simply the effect of the conviction, differing in its nature, just in as far as in the one case the conviction is that of an intellectual error, and in the other of a moral delinquency? What has inspired the agonizing horrors of conscience that have sometimes been consequent on the perpetration of some deed of peculiarly flagrant enormity, — that have wrung with torture, and agitated with phrenzy, the unnatural parricide, or the murderer of helpless age and unsuspecting innocence? Has it not been, in a special manner, the conviction in the judgment of responsibility to a Supreme Avenger, whose all-seeing eye no secresy can elude, and whose omnipotence no created power can withstand? If such a preacher as Paul could have "reasoned of righteousness and temperance," apart from "judgment to come," would Felix have trembled? And to what, accordingly, has the wretched victim of remorse and dread his recourse? Does he not try, by every means in his power, to banish the thought of this Being and of the judgment-seat from his mind, — or, by all the plausibilities of sophistical argument, to reason himself out of the conviction of the Divine existence and of human responsibility? The emotion being the product of the conviction, could he but eradicate the conviction, he would rid himself of the emotion.

It may possibly contribute to illustrate the views we have thus been taking of the operations of conscience, to consider for a few moments the question, — What is conscience in a sinless creature? or, in other words, What was conscience in man while in his state of innocence? — That during that period man was the subject of *consciousness*, it were a puerile truism to affirm; all that is meant by consciousness being no more than the mind's knowing and feeling itself to be in any particular state, whether of sentiment or of emotion: — and it was of course an impossibility that the mind of Adam should be in the state of holy sentiment and blissful emotion which were the characters of paradise, without his being aware of it! There was then a perfect identity between his judgment of rectitude and God's; and an identity equally perfect between his disposition towards it and God's. He knew this; he felt this. Is there any need for supposing more than this knowledge and this feeling, with the blessed habitude of soul thence resulting? Suppose we were to affirm the existence of *conscience*, what should we express by it? What would be the province of the new faculty? We have already an enlightened understanding and a pure heart; — perfect knowledge and perfect love; — a right judgment and a right disposition. This was the image of God; — light and love, — light in the mind, and love in the heart. What need, — nay, I think I may ask, what possibility, of any higher presiding and regulating principle? Is it not enough that there is a right disposition, under the guidance of a right judgment? — that love rules, under the direction of light? Is anything more requsite, to account for the phenomena? Is anything more really possible? Should we not be only in-

troducing a new term, without any really new power? — "It may be questioned," says a writer of merited celebrity, "whether the inhabitants of worlds unvisited by evil, how enlarged soever their intelligence may be, have thought of asking What is virtue? or What is the liberty of a moral agent?"* The same thing, I should think, may be said, with equal or with even greater truth, of the question, What is conscience?

And when man fell, — is there any necessity for supposing the introduction of a new faculty? To account for the new phenomena, — for his shame, and fear, and flight, — is anything more required than his knowing that he had done wrong, — his judgment pronouncing sentence upon his conduct, as a violation of the will of his Creator, his Benefactor, his God? He could not be in this new state of guilt and alienation, any more than in the previous one of innocence and love, without his being aware of it, without his knowing and feeling it: — nor could he be thus aware of it, without such emotions arising in his heart as those which the sacred narrative ascribes to him. When we say that *his conscience* told him he had done wrong, what is the process of mind which our words express? Is it any more than that, from his previous knowledge of his Maker's will, and of the terms of the divine covenant with him, he now knew that he had violated that will, that he had broken that covenant, that God was offended, that the sentence of death was incurred, that "all was lost?" And was not the thought of all this, — of the fearful transition he had made, — of an alienated God and a self-inflicted doom of

* Introd. Diss. to Edwards on the Will, by the author of the Nat. Hist. of Enthusiasm.

perdition, enough to account for the agony of remorse, the burning of indignant shame, and the trembling apprehension of encountering the eye, or hearing the voice, of Him whom he could no longer meet in love, — no longer as a benignant and smiling Father, but as an incensed and avenging Judge?

When the tempter held forth to our first parents the seductive allurement of "the knowledge of good and evil," as what would assimilate them to God, and what had, on this very account, been by him withheld from them, he knew well that he was presenting, under the mask of a tempting good, the greatest of possible ills, — an experimental acquaintance with that, of which "ignorance was bliss." It was then, I should apprehend, that the operation of what is usually denominated conscience properly began. It is a term which, in its customary use, belongs rather to the vocabulary of man's fallen, than of his unfallen nature. I say "in its customary use." I do not mean that in the state of paradisaical innocence there was not the "mens sibi *conscia* recti," — an inward approving testimony of conformity to God's will, and a feeling of responsibility to him. But there was no contrary testimony of existing evil, and nothing of the pain of accusation and chastisement: — there were no wicked propensities, against which conscience had to remonstrate, nor any crimes for which it had to inflict its vengeance. There was the simple and happy *consciousness* of good; — restraint and correction were unfelt. But these are the operations to which the term is most frequently applied, or which are most generally thought of when it is used. Its operation, at any rate, in its twofold capacity, was unknown till sin entered; and probably, till then the conception of it could hardly be

said to have a definite subsistence. It is the "knowledge of good and evil;" not a distinct or new faculty, but the judgment exercised upon our conduct, and discerning in it between right and wrong; bearing testimony for God, and rendering men "without excuse," when, from the influence of corrupt desires and affections, they suppress, pervert, or resist its intimations; and destined, on the one hand, by its clear and damnatory dictates operating upon an alienated heart and an unsubdued will, to be the chief and everlasting tormentor of the finally disobedient, — whilst, on the other, when, from a mind enlightened by the divine Word, and a heart freed by the Divine Spirit from the biasing and deceiving influence of a rebellious disposition, its dictates are sincerely obeyed, it becomes, by its inward approving testimony, a spring of the purest satisfaction and joy.

The emotions of self-satisfaction on the one hand, and remorse on the other, may be, but are not necessarily, transient. They may last for a shorter or a longer period; they may be permanent inmates of the bosom. The continuance of these feelings, respectively, arises of course from the existence of memory, which cherishes the remembrance of the good, and which will not allow us, how fondly soever we would, to forget the evil. "Conscience," says Dr. Brown, "is our moral memory; it is the memory of the heart." We remember the evil deed; the conviction of its evil nature attends the recollection, as it attended the commission of it; and the remorse attends the conviction, so long as memory continues to retain the fact. This is what has usually been termed the *haunting* of conscience.

When, to show the difference between conscience and judgment, Dr. Payne says, as quoted above, "My judg-

ment pronounces the conduct of a friend to be wrong, but it cannot be said that my conscience condemns him;" we have seen in what sense the statement is true, and how, at the same time, as bearing upon his object, it is fallacious. If conscience, indeed, is to be considered as at all including in its appropriate function the determination of right and wrong, — then it seems to me to be a self-evident truth, that the same faculty of mind which pronounces the sentence of right or wrong on the actions of others, must necessarily be that which pronounces similar sentence upon our own. If it be judgment in the one case, it must be judgment in the other; the sentence not depending on the person by whom the action is done, but on the nature of the action itself.

The *subsequent emotions*, however, are necessarily different: — "The emotions," says Dr. Brown, "with which we regard the virtues or vices of others, are very different from those with which we regard the same virtues or vices as our own. There is the distinctive moral feeling, indeed, in both cases, whether the generous sacrifice or the malignant atrocity which we contemplate be the deed of another, or our own heroic kindness or guilty passion; but in the one case, there is something far more than mere approbation, however pleasing, or mere disapprobation, however disagreeable. There is the dreadful moral regret, arising from the certainty that we have made ourselves unworthy of the love of men, and the approbation of God."

But, diverse as these subsequent emotions appear to be, they are, after all, very nearly akin. In the case of moral disapprobation of the deed of another, there is a rising indignation at the author of the atrocity, the guilty violator of moral principle. And what is the "moral regret" that

springs from the consciousness of wrong in our own conduct? What is it but a rising indignation, of which we are *ourselves* the objects? an indignation, proportioned to the magnitude of the crime, and of the forfeiture incurred by it; a rankling bitterness of self-reproach, such as at times may rise to phrenzy, and, arming the hand with the weapons of self destruction, may plunge the perpetrator into the woes of eternity, to escape the agonies of time.

The whole of the customary phraseology on the subject of conscience, both in the writings of philosophers and in every-day life, is framed upon the assumption, wittingly or unwittingly, that, whatever else it may be considered as including, it involves, as its first elementary operation, the application of the judgment to the moral character of our own actions. And on this ground, we revert to our former position, that, in determining the principles of moral rectitude, we cannot place any assured confidence in a judgment that is liable to all the biasing and perverting influences of depraved affections, and that has, in so many instances, some of them, in their nature and results, of very serious magnitude, given evidence of the power of these influences over its decisions.

The Apostle speaks of conscience as "bearing witness;" but it is a witness-bearer of unsteady principle, — exposed, in many ways, to the influence of bribery and corruption, ever ready to give a false verdict, to flatter men in the indulgence of their worldly and vicious inclinations, and even to give a perverse and mischievous direction to principles that in themselves are good. — There is, for example, a "zeal for God," that is "not according to knowledge." Saul of Tarsus was conscientious in persecuting and wasting the church of Christ. "I verily thought with myself," says he, "that I ought to

do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth:" — and his case was but one out of many exemplifications of the fulfilment of the Savior's premonition to his Apostles, — "They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, when whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." What was there, in all this, but a perverted judgment? And wherein, then, lay the guilt? It lay in the moral causes from which this perversion arose, and by which it was maintained. In Saul, it was the product of all that, in human nature universally, stands opposed to the grace and purity of the Gospel, along with the special pride of Jewish learning and pharisaical self-sufficiency; and afterwards, when his mind was enlightened and his heart was humbled by the Gospel, instead of vindicating and palliating his former conduct by pleading its conscientiousness, there is nothing that stirs in him such indignant self-loathing as the remembrance of the spirit by which he had been animated, when he "breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord;" and the very zeal which had then inflamed him, conscientious as it was, he regarded as having constituted him the "chief of sinners."* — When we say that the shame and the pain which he experienced arose from an enlightened and awakened conscience; what more do we mean, than that they arose from his having seen his conduct in a new light, and from a consequently altered judgment respecting its real principles and merits?

Conscience having thus partaken in the general depravity of human nature, we are not entitled to expect uniformity of operation in that which is necessarily af-

* Notes and Illustrations. Note K.

fected by a variety so endless of modifying circumstances. For infallible principles we must look to some other quarter.* What that quarter is, it has been the object of the preceding part of this Lecture to ascertain. If this has been satisfactorily done, how thankful have we not reason to be to that holy and just and good Being, who, in the midst of all our anxious uncertainties, has favored us with the sure intimations of his will; and, in the midst of all our corruption, and guilt, and fear, has sent us the "glad tidings" of a Savior; providing for us, through his mediation, a salvation as perfectly adapted to all the exigencies of our condition, as it is in accordance with the dictates and the claims of every attribute of his own all-perfect character!

* Notes and Illustrations. Note L.

LECTURE VI.

ON THE ORIGINAL PRINCIPLES OF MORAL OBLIGATION.

1 PETER I. 16.

"Be ye holy, for I am holy."

Summary of former statements.

I LAID before you, in last Lecture, all that I deem it necessary to say with regard to the RULE or LAW of duty, — the immediate ground of moral obligation to man, and in its essential principles, I doubt not, however modified by peculiarities of condition, to the whole intelligent universe, — the universe of accountable agents, subjects of God's moral administration. I have shown, that if God sustains the character of a moral Governor, and man is a subject of his dominion, it follows unavoidably, that the law of t hesubject's duty can be nothing else than the supreme will; — that the knowledge of this will was originally possessed by intuitive discernment, and, being "written on the heart," found a disposition there perfectly consentaneous to every iota of its holy requirements; — that through the defection of man from his uprightness of heart, the knowledge of God himself, and consequently the knowledge of his will, has been fearfully impaired, and, although still discovering itself in the dictates of his conscience, yet has necessa-

rily been bereft of its certainty and its consistency as a standard of moral rectitude; — and that this knowledge, lost by the sinful aversion of the human heart to retain it, has, through the unmerited favor of God, been restored in divine revelation.

Temper of mind in which the remaining and higher branch of the subject should be prosecuted.

We shall now endeavor to ascend a step higher. But, while we make the attempt, we would bear in our remembrance the sacredness and the loftiness of our theme, and the difficulties which must ever be involved in all such investigations as are ultimately connected with the infinite nature and the boundless administration of Deity. We cannot enter into the mind of the Eternal. We cannot read it in its own light. That is his own prerogative. "What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." What we know of him is all derived and mediate, and can extend no further than, in his sovereign pleasure, he may think fit, in whatever way, to reveal himself. It becomes us, therefore, to beware, that we do not, with unhallowed and presumptuous hand, tear asunder the vail that conceals the "Holy Place of the Most High," — the mysterious inner sanctuary, where are the dread symbols of his presence, and into which it is death to force an unwarranted entrance. But "the way into this holiest of all" has, we think, to a certain degree, been "made manifest;" so that, "taking off our shoe from our foot," as on "holy ground," we may, under his own permission, enter "with reverence and godly fear," and try what we can discover of the secret consels of Him who "dwelleth between the cherubim."

The will of God not the origin of the principles of rectitude, but itself determined by them.

It appears, then, to be a sentiment which, so far from there being any presumption in affirming it, it would be dishonorable to the Divine Being to question,—that, while to his creatures his will is the immediate rule of duty and ground of obligation, yet, in its legislative prescriptions, that will is not capricious and arbitrary; that there must be certain principles by which it is itself determined, conformity to which is what, in his estimation, constitutes right, and disconformity, wrong; and by which, consequently, the rules of duty prescribed by him to his intelligent offspring are dictated; — that, in short, with regard to every moral duty, there is an important sense, in which the proposition, however startling the terms of it may be to the inconsiderate mind, is manifestly true, — that it is not right because God wills it, but that God wills it because it is right. And this leads us at once to our present point. It is in that, whatsoever it be, on account of which God wills it, and conformity to which constitutes it in his eyes right, that the original, or elementary and essential principles of moral virtue properly consist.

Sentiments on this subject, of Bishop Horsley.

"After all that can be said," writes Bishop Horsley, "and said with truth, about the immutable distinctions of right and wrong, and eternal fitnesses of things, it should seem that the will of God is the true foundation of moral obligation; — for I cannot understand, how any man's bare perception of the natural seemliness of one action and unseemliness of another should bring him under an obligation on all occasions to do the one and to avoid the other, at the hazard of his life, to the detriment of his fortune, or even to the diminution of his own ease, which suffers diminution in every instance in which he lays a restraint upon

his inclination; — I say, I cannot understand how the bare perception of good in actions of one sort, or of evil in actions of another, should create such an obligation, that a man, if he were not accountable to a superior for the conduct of his life, should yet be criminal, if, in the view of his own happiness and ease, he should sometimes think proper to omit the action he admires, and to do that which he disapproves.

"On such obligation, therefore, arising from the intuitive perception of right and wrong, it follows, that, notwithstanding the reality of those differences, and the immutable nature of the two things, still the obligation upon man to act in conformity to these perceptions arises from the will of God, who enjoins a conformity of our conduct to these natural perceptions of our minds, and binds the obligation by assurances, that what we lose of present gratification shall be amply compensated in a future retribution, and by threatening the disobedient with heavier ills than the restraints of self-denial, or the loss of life."

"Now, although this fitness and propriety," says the Bishop again, "be not the origin of moral obligation among men, yet it is indeed a higher principle; for it is that from which that will of God himself originates, by which the natural discernment of our consciences acquires the force of a law for the regulation of our lives." And again: — "We discern in these natural duties that intrinsic worth and seemliness, which is the motive that determines the divine Will to exact the performance of them from the rational part of his creation; for God's will is not arbitrary, but directed by his goodness and his wisdom. Or, to go a step higher, the natural excellence of these duties, we may reasonably presume

was the original motive which determined the Deity to create beings who should be capable of being brought to that dignity of character which a proficiency in virtue confers, and enjoying, in their improved state of moral worth, a corresponding happiness."*

Let not the introduction of such quotations be interpreted by any of my hearers, as implying my approbation of every incidental sentiment, or mode of expression, which they may contain. I should, in the present instance, for example, strongly demur to the closing sentence of the citations just made, which seems to convey the idea that creatures were formed, or might be formed, by the infinitely holy Creator, which, at the time of their formation, were only "*capable of being brought* to that dignity of character which a proficiency in virtue confers:"—for surely, every rational creature, when fresh from the creating hand of immaculate purity, must have been not merely capable of attaining, but *in actual possession of* this dignity. "God made man upright." It is in every case, not an acquired, but a native dignity; and if, in the character of any intelligent creature, we find a "proficiency in virtue still to be *acquired*," we may be certain that that creature is in a state of degeneracy from its original rectitude. God has given being to creatures, who have subsequently lost their "proficiency in virtue;" but we cannot imagine him to bring into existence such as, after their creation, require to be "brought" by him to this proficiency. Any state of created intelligence that is short of sinless perfection must be a fallen state, from which, through the operation of some system of moral means provided by the mercy of the

* Horsley's Sermons, Vol. II. Serm. XXI.

Sovereign, there may be progressive stages of recovery. Such is the condition of man. I have cited from Horsley, chiefly for the sake of the general sentiment contained in the extracts; namely, that there are eternal fitnesses by which the will of God is itself determined, and conformity to which constitutes its necessary and immutable rectitude. Allow me, however, to analyze a little closely this sentiment.

Analysis and bearings of the position that the divine Will is determined by previous fitnesses.

I have granted, as a position which it would be profanity to dispute,* that the will of the infinitely wise and good is not arbitrary, but "directed by his wisdom and his goodness."— When, however, we speak of conformity to certain fitnesses of things constituting the rectitude of the divine Will, it may be deserving of our attentive consideration, whether we are not proceeding upon the supposition of what can have no possible subsistence, — a standard, namely, of relative abstractions — of fitnesses *independent of all being*. Whenever we utter the word "fitnesses," we unavoidably have in our minds the conception of existing beings, with certain relations subsisting between them, to which particular dispositions and modes of conduct are conceived to have a natural and necessary adaptation, — such an adaptation, that the incongruity and unseemliness of their opposites is intuitively discerned by every rightly constituted mind. But what do we mean, when we speak of these fitnesses as *eternal?* If they are fitnesses of *relation* (and what else can they be?) it is clear that they can be eternal no otherwise than *hypothetically;* that is, they can be eternal, only as subsisting in the divine Mind itself, in connection with the

* Notes and Illustrations. Note M.

prospective contemplation of existences to come, between which such relations should arise, — relations to himself, and relations to one another, — of creature to creature, and of creatures to God. These fitnesses could not be antecedent to God; for nothing could precede eternity, — the uncommencing existence of the great "I AM." Neither could they exist abstractedly from God, or independently of him; for then we should have fitnesses *independent of all being;* — than which, if we reflect for a moment, I greatly deceive myself if there can be anything more self-contradictory and impossible.

When creation began, we know not. There were angels, and there was a place of angelic habitation, before the creation of man and of the world destined for his residence; — and even amongst these pure spiritual essences, there had been a rebellion, and a fall. How long these spirits had existed, and how many other orders of being besides, it is vain for us to conjecture; for conjecture could lead to nothing surer than itself. But of one thing we are certain; — that, how far back soever we suppose the commencement of creation carried, — let it be, not only beyond the actual range (if a definite range it can be said to have) of the human imagination, but even beyond the greatest amount of ages that figures, in any way combined, could be made to express; — still there was an eternity preceding, — an eternity, from which this unimaginable and incomputable duration has made not the minutest deduction; for it is the property of eternity, that it can neither be lengthened by the addition, nor shortened by the subtraction, of the longest possible periods of time. Before the commencement of creation, therefore, — before the *fiat* of Omnipotence which gave being to the first dependent existence, and dated the be-

ginning of time,—in infinite and incomprehensible solitude, yet, in the boundless self-sufficiency of his blessed nature, feeling no want and no dreariness, — Jehovah had, from eternity, existed alone!

There is something awfully sublime in this conception of Deity. Our minds are overwhelmed, when we attempt to think of infinite space, even as it is replenished with its millions of suns and systems of inhabited worlds; — but still more are they baffled and put to a stand, when we try to form a conception of immensity, before sun or star existed, before any creature had a being, — of immensity, filled with nothing but the pure, etherial, invisible essence of the great uncreated Spirit. When we think of the millions of worlds, with all their interminable varieties of spiritual and material, animate and inanimate, brute and intelligent, tribes of being, there is unavoidably in our minds the conception of Deity as having, in the superintendence of all his works of wisdom, power, and goodness, both incessant occupation, and exhaustless sources of enjoyment. But when we set our imaginations to the task of blotting out creation, — of annihilating all but God, — and endeavor to fancy the vast solitudes of immensity, with no existence whatever, save that of the unseen all-pervading Deity, — and conceive of this Being, as having from eternity been in possession of infinite enjoyment, — all within himself, — not at all requiring to put forth his creative power on *his own* account, in order to supply any lack, any felt deficiency; — our conception of him, although it may be less brilliant and less inviting, yet has in it, from its very undefined mysteriousness, a more appalling grandeur; a grandeur, which is depressed rather than elevated, diminished rather than amplified, by the obtrusion upon the scene of solitary

vastness of the rising magnificence of the created universe. It is the grandeur of self-sufficiency, — the majesty of eternal independence. We may feel it more easy to contemplate the Godhead through the medium of his works, and withal more attractive and pleasing, because it brings into play the feelings generated by the relations in which he stands to created existences, and the attributes of character which those relations unfold: — but, although we are sensible that there is a coldness in the undefined conception of solitary infinitude — of a Being existing by himself, unrelated, and holding no communion with any mind but his own; — yet, chilling as the abstraction is, it is the chillness of a deeper awe, — an awe, which annihilates self in the presence of that mysterious Being, who, before a creature existed, and even for a preceding eternity, possessed within himself all that was necessary to infinite and unchanging felicity!

But I must not allow such thoughts to draw me into too wide a digression from my present point. When, in tracing back existence, from the simple postulate that *something now is*, we arrive at the great First Cause, the Originator of all being but his own; and with a certainty strictly demonstrative, come to the conclusion that this great First Cause is a Being that exists by an absolute necessity of nature; — we are at once sensible that we can go no further. We have reached the ultimate point, beyond which there *is* nothing, and *can be* nothing. — It is true, that when we speak of Deity as existing by an absolute necessity, we use language which involves in it a great deal more than we are capable of distinctly comprehending: — but it is not by our capacity of comprehension that we are to measure truth; it is by the results of legitimate ratiocination. The conclusions to which

we are conducted, may, in their vastness and abstruseness, be full of mystery, — they may have in them "a length and breadth, and depth and height, passing knowledge," — while yet they are so sure, that every attempt even to imagine the contrary involves us in palpable contradiction.*

Thus it is with regard to the divine *existence*. Now the very same process of reasoning which we apply to his existence, is, with equal legitimacy, applicable to his *nature*. If he exists by an absolute necessity, then, by the same necessity, he not only *is*, but *is what he is*. — And, whether his nature be considered physically, intellectually, or morally, the observation is equally true. Whatever attributes belong to it, they belong to it by the same necessity that is predicated of its existence. If, therefore, in tracing back existence, we arrive at our ultimate point in Deity, — being arrested and fixed in the eternal necessity of his being, — must not the same be the result, in tracing to their origin the principles of moral rectitude? — Here, also, do not we reach our ultimate point in Deity? If we cannot go further back in regard to *being*, can we in regard to *principle*? Are we not arrested and fixed by the eternal necessity of the principles of the divine character, — the attributes or qualities of the divine nature, — just as really, and as finally, as we are by the necessity of the divine existence? It must be in the moral world as it is in the physical; with regard to virtue, as with regard to matter and mind. In tracing back existence, we come to the necessity of God's *being*; in tracing back principles, we come to the necessity of

* Notes and Illustrations. Note N.

Ultimate point to which the analysis leads us.

God's *character*. In neither case can we reach any further than this point of necessity. We are constrained to stop here: — and, when we have thus resolved the ultimate principles of moral rectitude in the creature, into conformity with the eternal and immutable prototype of all excellence in the nature of the Godhead, our minds repose, in delightful satisfaction, on this secure resting place. To talk of any fitnesses of things by which, as a standard, *the rectitude of that nature itself* is to be tried and ascertained, is as inconsiderate as it is profane: — for, not only is this to suppose fitnesses existing independently of all being whatever, which is sheer absurdity; it is, at the same time, going beyond necessity, and assuming something ulterior, *according to which that which is necessary must be;* which is a plain contradiction in terms.

I know not whether I have carried your minds along with my own; — but here I feel that I must stay my flight. The eye of human reason must not attempt to penetrate, nor the wing of human fancy to soar, beyond the throne of the Eternal. It is a bold flight for a creature even to approach it; but, when the flight is attempted for the devout purpose of laying at the feet of "Him that sitteth upon the throne," the homage of his own creation, and — (the wing that has borne us to his seat covering our faces in his presence) — of acknowledging and adoring Him, as at once the origin of all existence, and the prototype of all excellence, it will not, we humbly trust, be condemned as presumptuous.

The conclusion to which we have been conducted, as honoring

The conclusion to which we have come, while it seems the obvious dictate of enlightened reason, has the additional recommendation

to the pious mind, of being eminently glorifying to God. It is, that, instead of any abstract fitnesses being the standard or measure of the divine nature, the divine nature must itself be the origin and the standard of all fitnesses: — that, just as the necessary existence of Deity is the origin, or *punctum saliens of* all other being, so the necessary moral principles of the divine nature are the source and pattern of all other excellence; and that virtue in the creature is conformity to this divine original. And from this it follows further, that the essential principles of rectitude having existed in Deity before creation, and being consequently altogether independent of the relations to which creation gave rise; the fitnesses of all these relations and of the duties respectively arising out of them, are not standards, but only manifestations, of the principles of the divine character, having all of them their origin from those principles, and being all of course in harmony with them. Why Deity is what he is, is a question which can never be asked but by a combination of presumptuous impiety and egregious folly. We can say no more than what we have said, that he is what he is by an eternal and unalterable necessity. And, on the grounds which have been mentioned, it matters little whether we speak of moral goodness as consisting in conformity to his *nature* or in conformity to his *will;* there being a perfect and necessary coincidence between the one and the other; his will being the counterpart of his nature, and the expression and indication of his character to his rational creatures.

to God as it is satisfactory to reason.

In this view, we might regard the words of our text, as the voice of Jehovah, not to the particular tribe of mankind merely to whom they were specially addressed, but to the whole rational universe. Assuming his own

all-perfect nature as the pattern of principle for all creatures endowed with intelligence, we may conceive him as issuing through all worlds the brief but comprehensive and authoritative mandate, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." It is the language of absolute underived supremacy; the language of Him on whom all creation depends, and who is himself independent of all creation, — who rules a subject universe, swaying no hereditary or delegated sceptre, but the sceptre of eternal, indefeasible, intransferable right. His holiness is not conformity to the holiness of another; but the holiness of every other is conformity to his. He had no superior, — no one before him, no one above him, to hold himself forth as an exemplar, and say to him, "Be holy, for I am holy." The language is exclusively his own. And what higher or better reason can be assigned, why creatures should be holy, than that their Creator is holy, and that it is his will that the subjects of his moral administration should resemble himself?

The conclusion to which we have come, a starting point for a new course of observation.

Having thus, then, ascertained the origin of moral obligation, — the primary principles of rectitude, as subsisting in the nature of the infinite God; we start again from this point, in a new course of observation. We have reasoned backward, till we have arrived at principles that are necessary and eternal: — we may now trace forward these principles in their practical development, and see to what results, in the theory of moral science, we may thus be conducted.

What were the occupations of the divine Mind, during the eternity that preceded creation? — We feel as if we were chargeable with presumption, in having even so

much as ventured to put the question into words;—so infinitely is the subject beyond the range of our short-sighted speculations,—wrapt in a secresy so profound and awful,—the secresy of Him, "whom no man hath seen nor can see,"—of the depths of whose nature there is no line of created intelligence that can take the soundings. Of one thing, however, we are sure; that at what point soever this Being began to put forth the energy of his creative might, there must have been a perfect fitness, or congruity, between his acts and the principles of his moral nature; a congruity fully apparent to his own mind, and clearly discernible by every mind formed with a participation of his own intelligence. This congruity is what the inspired historian of the creation expresses, when, after recording the six days' work, he says—"And God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good." And indeed, it is on this necessary congruity that the entire process is founded, of reading in the works the character of the Maker. Were it at all possible, that the product of any act of his power should be out of harmony with any attribute of his character, it would cease to be possible for any of his creatures, however intelligent, and however unbiased in the exercise of his intelligence by any moral obliquity of disposition, to read nature's lessons with any clearness, or to arrive at truth with any certainty. The fault, in that case, would not be in the reader, but in the book. The oracle being ambiguous, no blame could be attached to those who understood it in different ways.

These things are sufficiently plain. Since the commencement of creation, the Almighty has not only been the Governor of moral agents, he has been *an agent himself;* and, in all his own procedure, we must, without

doubt, conceive of him as acting in the strictest agreement with the immutable principles of his character. — By these principles, therefore, essentially and eternally inherent in his nature, he was guided in the formation of the universe, — in fixing the constitutions, allotting the circumstances, and adjusting the mutual relations, of all his creatures. And of this it was a natural and necessary consequence, that these same principles, transferred from the Creator to the creature, emanating from the nature of the one to the nature of the other, became the creature's happiness in time, as they had been his own from eternity. — I speak now of his rational creation. The principles of his moral nature were such, it is true, as to insure, in the exercise of his omnipotence, the communication of happiness to the whole range of sentient as well as of intelligent being. But our present discussion relates to those who, in the possession of reason and of holiness, were made "after God's own image." In them, the principles of moral rectitude, being a communication from the fullness of Deity, were the same in kind as in the fullness from which they were imparted, — the same in the created nature as in the uncreated, — the same in the stream as in the fountain. No stream but a pure stream could flow from the fountain of purity.

This necessary conformity of the character of the intelligent creature to that of his holy Creator was exemplified in man. His nature was then a fair and faithful indication of the nature of God; the excellence of the Maker being made apparent in the excellence of his work. Man himself, in his own *consciousness*, possessed this inward witness for God; and in his *character* he presented the testimony to others. Angels saw in him the image of the same pure and blessed Being from whom they had

received their own holy and happy nature. — But man, as an apostate and degenerate creature, is in an unnatural and anomalous state; so that, as formerly observed, the lesson of the moral perfection of the Creator is not now to be read in *what he is*, but rather in the means which have been devised and brought into operation, to make him again *what he was:* — and these means it is the special province of revelation to discover. — I am speaking at present of the general principle, not of the particular exception: — and the principle is one which I may surely assume as beyond contradiction, that, throughout the whole range of being, there was a harmony between creation and the principles of rectitude in the Creator. From this arises the immediate consequence, that the principles being developed in creation, creation becomes, reciprocally, a test or criterion of the principles. Power and skill framed and furnished the material universe; and hence, in all parts of the material universe that come within our observation, we discern the traces, clear and numberless, of power and skill. The manifestation of moral principle, — that is, of the holiness of the divine character, — is to be looked for, of course, only in the department of intelligent creation: — and there, we may be assured, could we have surveyed the universe in its first estate, we should have seen in every part of it, the traces, as clear and numberless, of untainted purity as of wisdom and might. The same thing is equally true of benevolence. — The entire process of creation, in short, in all its amplitude and in all its details, having been conducted in conformity with all the attributes of the Creator, these attributes come of course to be discernible in their results, and ascertainable from them.

True position for the theory of utility.

I come to the point towards which these remarks have been directed. *Here*, I apprehend, is the proper position for the theory of *utility*. If, instead of representing utility as the *foundation* of the principles of moral rectitude, or as that *on account* of which they are to be regarded as right, the utilitarian theorists had represented it as a *manifestation of the nature and tendency of those principles*, they would have come nearer to the truth. It must be obvious to every mind, that a principle may in its nature, when put into practical exercise, be fitted to produce happiness, whilst yet the production of happiness is not that which constitutes the rectitude of the principle.

Utility, though not the foundation, a criterion of rectitude.

While I more than hesitate to admit, that utility, or the tendency to happiness, is the ultimate principle into which moral rectitude is to be resolved. there can be no hesitation in admitting, that happiness is the direct and invariable result of the putting forth of the principles of moral rectitude on the part of the Godhead;—and, as a consequence, that, when *understood in its proper extent*, and *estimated by a mind of capacity sufficient to comprehend that extent*, utility, though not itself constituting rectitude, becomes its legitimate and correct criterion.

Comprehensiveness of the term.

But I must be allowed to explain what I mean by the *proper extent* of the import of the term, and by the necessity for a sufficiently comprehensive mind to make it the rule of judgment. In the first place, there are few or none of our utilitarian philosophers who give comprehension enough to the term utility. Some speak very loosely of what is useful *to ourselves*, or *to others*, without either defining what they mean by useful, or in-

timating, whether they take into their estimate of it the present life only, or the whole extent of our existence. Others take a wider range. They speak of the good of the universe, — of the happiness of the entire system of created beings, — of what is useful on the whole. But even this, vast as the idea is, appears to me too limited. There is a view of tendencies that is prior and superior to the benefit of creation, — one, at the same time, with which the benefit of creation is intimately and necessarily associated. In an estimate of tendencies, or in considering what any particular created existence, or any prescribed action or course of conduct, is *good for*, what would be the first thing that would present itself to the mind of an angel of light? Would it not be — *the glory of God?* The glory of God is, I have admitted, inseparably associated with the good of the universe, and essential to its attainment; but still it is above it, — first in order, first in magnitude. He who can fancy to himself anything connected with creation, of what extent and value soever, to which the glory of the Supreme Creator ought to give place, has reason to examine the reality of his devotion, as well as the soundness of his philosophy. There is an essential defect in the sense affixed to the term *utility*, when this first and highest branch of it is left out of the account: — and the defect, whatever men may think of it, is indicative of the ungodliness of our nature. When we do take the term in its due fullness of comprehension, we have then, assuredly, before our minds, all that we can imagine to have been in the Creator's view, in the production and arrangement of the great system of being; the glory of his own name, and the happiness of all else that exists, exhausting all the possibilities of final causations. And from this it

unquestionably follows, that whatever in conduct is in harmony with the glory of God and the good of the universe, cannot fail to be also in harmony with the principles of moral rectitude.

Incompetency of our minds to apply the criterion, unfits it for being a rule for our conduct.

But then, secondly, the criterion is one prodigiously too vast and complicated, to be brought into application by our minds, or by the mind of any creature. On which account there cannot be a more egregious error, than to propose the scheme of utility as a rule for the direction of human conduct. The same difficulties would beset us in applying this criterion of duty, as those by which we are embarrassed and overwhelmed, when we presume to sit in judgment on the administration of divine providence. In no step of God's providential procedure can there be any higher end in contemplation than the greatest measure of glory to himself and of good to the universe. But the connections of events are so intricate, and their relative bearings and tendencies so inconceivably complicated; there are in the machinery that works out the divine purposes so many "wheels within wheels," of which the slightest disadjustment might give occasion to the most mischievous results; incidents the most trival, and events the most momentous, are so intimately blended and reciprocally linked together, as causes and effects; that no creature can, *à priori*, be a competent judge with regard to the ultimate consequencs of even the most apparently insignificant occurrence.

The application of the case to the one before us is too obvious to require illustration; and I fear I am repeating, to too great an extent, what was said in other terms in a former Lecture. Bear with me, however, on account of the special importance of the theory, and for the sake of

the special importance of the theory, and for the sake of the conclusion to which my observations are now conducting. Even setting the glory of the divine Being aside, what can our minds make of the good of the universe, — nay, of the good even of our own system, or of our own world? Were we capable, indeed, of estimating the good of creation, and of determining what is conducive and what prejudicial to it, we should be capable also, it might be alleged, of settling what is for the glory of God; his infinite benevolence having so united his own glory with the universal good, that, wherever a decided tendency to the latter can be established, the conclusion is involved of a tendency also to the former. But neither the one nor the other is at all within the range of our limited faculties.

"The welfare of the whole system of being," says Robert Hall,* (and our only objection to the language is, that in the mind of the admirable writer there appears to have been, at the time, rather too exclusive a reference to the system of *created* being,) — "the welfare of the whole of being must be allowed to be, *in itself*, the object of all others the most worthy to be pursued; so that, could the mind distinctly embrace it, and discern at every step *what action* would infallibly promote it, we should be furnished with a sure criterion of right and wrong, — an unerring guide, which would supersede the use and necessity of all inferior rules, laws, and principles. But this being impossible, since the good of the whole is a motive so loose and indeterminate, and embraces such an infinity of relations, that, before we could be certain what action it prescribed, the season for action would be past;

* Sermon on Modern Infidelity. — Works, Vol. I. pp. 56, 57.

to weak short-sighted mortals providence has assigned a sphere of agency, less grand, indeed, and extensive, but better suited to their limited powers, by implanting certain affections which it is their duty to cultivate, and suggesting particular rules to which they are bound to conform."

The criterion one which must be applied by Deity for us, and the result communicated becomes our rule.

In a word,—the test is manifestly one which no mind but the Divine is possessed of sufficient extension and intuitive certainty of discernment, to apply, with any approach to precision. What, then, is the conclusion? The conclusion is, that it must be applied by Deity for us; and, in what way soever may seem to him best, Deity must communicate to us the results:—which leads us, by a somewhat different route, to the same point at which we formerly arrived; the communication of such results amounting to the same thing with the revelation to us of his will; and his will, so discovered, becoming the rule or law of our conduct.

The celebrated American theologian, President Dwight, while he maintains the principle that "*virtue is founded in utility*," disclaims utility as the rule of virtue to us, and rests his disclaimer on similar grounds to those which have just been stated. After mentioning, as the great objection to his doctrine, "that if virtue is founded in utility, then utility becomes the measure of virtue, and of course the rule of all our moral conduct;"—"This," says he, "is the error of Godwin, and, in an indefinite degree, of Paley, and several other writers. Were we omniscient, and able to discern the true nature of all the effects of our conduct, this consequence must undoubtedly be admitted. To the eye of God it is the real rule. It will not, I trust, be denied, that he has chosen and required that to be done by his intelligent creatures, which is most useful;

or, in other words, most productive of good to the universe and of glory to himself; rather than that which is less so. But to us, utility, as judged of by ourselves, cannot be a proper rule of moral conduct. The real usefulness of our conduct, or its usefulness upon the whole, lies in the nature of all its effects, considered as one aggregate. But nothing is more evident, than that few, very few indeed, of these can ever be known to us by our own foresight. If the information given us by the Scriptures concerning this subject, were to be lost; we should be surprised to see, how small was the number of cases, in which this knowledge was attainable, even in a moderate degree, and how much uncertainty attended even these. As, therefore, we are unable to discern, with truth or probability, the real usefulness of our conduct, it is impossible that our moral actions can be safely guided by this rule." — "As well might a man determine, that a path, whose direction he can discern only for a furlong, will conduct him in a straight course to a city distant from him a thousand miles, as to determine that an action whose immediate tendency he perceives to be useful will therefore be useful through a thousand years, or even through ten. How much less able must he be to perceive, what will be its real tendency in the remote ages of endless duration! It is impossible, therefore, that utility, as decided by our judgment, should become the rule of moral action."* — He accordingly comes to the same conclusion with ourselves; finding in the "precepts of the Sacred Volume," "the only safe rule by which moral beings can, in this world, direct their conduct."†

* Dwight's Theology, Serm. XCIX. † Ibid.

Danger of leaving the test of utility to the judgment of the creature, exemplified in the first transgression.

Were I called upon for an exemplification of the danger of leaving to the judgment of the creature the determination of what is for the best, I should point at once to the first human transgression. It was committed on the very principle of utility, or expediency: "The woman saw that the tree was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise."* It was under a partial and sadly mistaken view of appearances and consequences, that the evil was done. Anticipated benefit to the individual, and perhaps Eve might flatter herself, to her whole future progeny, was the motive to its perpetration. Shall we ever think, then, of setting up as the master principle for the government of our conduct, one which proved the temptation and ruin of man even in his uprightness, and which when applied by a creature that is corrupt, and blinded, and self-interested, cannot fail to prove incessantly fallacious and seductive? — a principle, which, when applied by God himself, with a full and unerring comprehension of all its relations, produces results that are perfectly and necessarily correct, — but of which, alas! in reference to man, we are constrained to say, as the Apostle says of the Law — "It is weak, through the flesh!"

Illustration in the same fact of the true ground of obligation to the creature.

In this first transgression, too, we have a satisfactory confirmation of the principle, that, to the creature, the will of God is the immediate and proper ground of moral obligation. In the prohibitory precept that was violated, and the violation of which "brought death into the world and all our

* Gen. iii. 6.

woe," there is nothing discernable of *à priori* fitness, — of conformity to the nature and relations of things; — nothing which, without the direct intimation of Heaven, could have led our first parents to refrain from eating of the forbidden tree, more than of any other. The obligation to abstinence arose, simply and exclusively, from the will of God made known to them; and their sin, consequently, consisted solely in the violation of that will. Various important ends might be specified, as having been answered by the selection of the particular kind of test by which the principle of allegiance, in the progenitors of our race, was put to the proof. At present, we only notice the one that is immediately connected with our subject. It was admirably fitted to teach the salutary lesson, *wherein the true essence of sin consisted;* not in the amount of physical mischief produced by it; not even in the abstract nature of the thing prohibited, on which man should be left to speculate and decide for himself; but simply in *opposition to God.* Nothing could more clearly or impressively inculcate the truth, that *God's will was to be the sole law of man's duty.* And the valuable moral lessons which were thus conveyed by it ought, we may remark, to redeem this particular in the primeval condition of man from the unhallowed mockery with which it has ofttimes been assailed by the profane scoffer and the philosophic infidel.

I do feel as if some apology were necessary for so frequent a recurrence to this particular theory. The defective discussion of it formerly, however, arose from my having purposely delayed further observations till this point of our progress; and the avoidance of anticipation has thus given occasion to partial repetition. It appeared to me, moreover, that the place which utility legitimately

occupies might be shown more distinctly and with greater effect, now that we have seen its necessity, as a sequence from the eternal principles put forth by the divine Mind in the creation and constitution of the universe. It would be inexcusable to pass without notice the eminent names which stand associated with the theory as its advocates, and the different lights in which, by those different advocates, it has been held and vindicated. With no intention to depreciate others, I may be allowed to select two, whose high merits none will dispute, — DWIGHT and PALEY.

Strictures on the views of Dr. Dwight.

It has been the leading object of the former part of this discourse, to show, that the principles of moral rectitude, as subsisting in the character of Deity, possess the same eternal necessity as his existence; — and in the latter, as a legitimate conclusion from this, that utility, or the tendency to the production of happiness, is not what constitutes those principles right, but rather the natural and appropriate consequence of their rectitude; in other words, that they are not right because they produce happiness, but that they produce happiness because they are right; their nature not arising from their tendency, but their tendency from their nature. I cannot help thinking, that, partly from the want of due attention to this simple distinction between the *nature* of a thing and its *tendencies*, there is a degree of confusion in the statements of the American divine to whom I formerly referred. He proves, with a force of argument that cannot be withstood, the absurdity of the hypothesis, by which the *foundation of virtue is placed in the will of God*;* and shows, that its excellence lies in its own na-

* Theology, Serm. XCIX. From this Sermon, which is entitled "Utility the Foundation of Virtue," all the subsequent citations are taken.

ture, to which the will of God is conformed, and by which it is determined. Yet he, at the same time, contends for the position that "*virtue is founded in utility*," — meaning, by utility, "a tendency to produce happiness." Let us examine a little the consistency of these statements.

"From these considerations," says Dr. Dwight referring to preceding reasonings, "it is, I apprehend, evident, that *the foundation of virtue is not in the will of God, but in the nature of things.* The next object of inquiry, therefore, is, *Where in the nature of things, shall we find this foundation?*" In answer to this question, he lays down and illustrates the two propositions, that "there is no ultimate good but happiness," and that "virtue is the only original cause of happiness." According to him, virtue and vice are such because of their respective tendencies; that of the one to happiness, that of the other to misery. "Were sin," says he, "in its own proper tendency, to produce, invariably, the same good which it is the tendency of virtue to produce; were it the means, invariably, of the same glory to God, and of the same enjoyment to the universe, no reason is apparent to me, why it would not become excellent, commendable, and rewardable, in the same manner as virtue now is. Were virtue regularly to effectuate the same dishonor to God and the same misery to intelligent creatures, now effectuated by sin; I see no reason why we should not attribute to it all the odiousness, blame-worthiness, and desert of punishment, which we now attribute to sin. *All this*," he adds, "*is, I confess, impossible;* and is rendered so *by the nature of these things.* Still the supposition may be allowably made for the sake of discussion."

Now here the confusion to which I have adverted is apparent. The foundation of virtue is not, he successfully

evinces, in the will of God, but in the nature of things. "Where, in the nature of things," he then asks, "shall we find this foundation?" And, in answer to this inquiry, he finds the foundation in the tendency to the only ultimate good, to happiness: — "Virtue is termed good, only as being the cause of happiness." But, with all deference, I would submit the query, whether this is finding the foundation in the *nature of things* at all?

The *nature* of things, and the *tendency* of things, it seems very inadimssible thus to confound. And when the Doctor admits the reversal of the respective results of virtue and vice to be "*rendered impossible by the nature of these things*," he himself recognizes the obvious distinction. To say, then, that virtue is founded in utility, and, at the same time, that virtue possesses a previous and essential nature from which it is that this utility arises, is manifestly incorrect. It is confounding the effect with the cause, the stream with the fountain, essential properties with their appropriate results. I am aware that Dr. Dwight has given his own definition of the "foundation of virtue." "It is," says he, "that which constitutes its value and excellence;" and these he finds exclusively in its tendencies and effects. But still, the tendencies and effects, we must contend, are not properly intrinsic excellence; and it is in the intrinsic excellence, or essential nature of virtue, that its foundation is to be sought. "If virtue and vice," says Dr. Dwight, "had originally, or as they were seen by the eye of God, no moral difference in their nature; then there was plainly no reason why God should prefer, or why he actually preferred, one of them to the other." Now the "moral difference *in their nature*" does not consist in their different tendencies and effects; but their different tendencies

and effects are the appropriate indications of their respective natures. And the truth appears to be, as I have formerly stated it, that the principles of moral rectitude are fixed by the necessity of the divine nature; that this necessity is of course independent of all tendencies and effects; that these, as evolved in creation and providence, are only the manifestation of the necessary nature of the Godhead; that all that is in conformity with the eternal principles of this nature, is virtue, and all that is contrary to them vice: and that the tendency of all virtue must, from the nature of things, be the same with the tendency of those divine principles in conformity to which it consists.

The same observations apply to the utilitarian system, in what form and under what modifications soever it has been maintained; namely, that it makes that to constitute virtue, or moral rectitude, which is rather a result of its previous and essential nature. The *expediency* of Dr. Paley must come under a still heavier condemnation than the loftier *utility* of Dr. Dwight. There is nothing, it is true, as to which Paley is more explicit, than that, whatever theory be adopted as to the *principle* of morals, the *rule* is the will of God. This is a position he frequently repeats. Strictures on the views of Dr. Paley.

"Private happiness," says he, "is our motive, and the will of God our rule;"* — and again, "As the will of God is our rule, to inquire what is our duty, or what we are obliged to do, is, in effect, to inquire what is the will of God in that instance; which, consequently, becomes *the whole business of morality.*"† He afterwards pro-

* Mor. and Polit. Phil. Book II. Chap. iii.

† Ibid. Book II. Chap. iv.

ceeds to show the different ways in which the divine will is to be ascertained. And here it is that the charge of Dr. Dwight against him, in classing him with those who find the rule as well as the principle of morals in utility, has its just application; for, in regard to all practical purposes, it amounts to the same thing, whether we consider the "tendency to produce happiness" as the rule itself by which we are to regulate our conduct, or as the standard and test by which that rule is to be ascertained. The latter is the position taken by Paley, wherever revelation is not possessed, and in all cases in which revelation may leave us at a loss: — "The method of coming at the will of God concerning any action, by the light of nature, is to inquire into the tendency of the action to promote the general happiness. This rule proceeds upon the presumption, that God Almighty wills and wishes the happiness of his creatures; and consequently, that those actions, which promote that will and wish must be agreeable to him, and the contrary."†

That "God Almighty wills and wishes the happiness of his creatures," — being a proposition equivalent to the simple affirmation of the benevolence of the divine nature, is not to be questioned; and nowhere are illustrations to be found of the truth of the proposition, as it is exemplified in the constitution and phenomena of animated nature, more beautiful and more convincing, than in the writings of Paley himself. It is marvellous, however, that he should not have been more sensible of the preposterousness of expecting, from such a creature as man, the correct application of such a test of right and wrong as the conduciveness of actions to the general happiness. And the

† Mor. and Polit. Phil. Book II. Chap. iv.

wonder is not abated, when we read his own description of the expediency (the term used by him to sum up the tendencies to happiness) by which the judgment is to be determined, and the cases of casuistry settled: — "Whatever is expedient is right. But then, it must be expedient upon the whole, at the long run, in all its effects, collateral and remote, as well as in those which are immediate and direct; as it is obvious, that, in computing consequences, it makes no difference in what way, or at what distance, they ensue." * We may surely exclaim, in regard to the application of such a test — "Who is sufficient for these things?" Nay more. To make Dr. Paley consistent with himself, the expediency which is the test of virtue must comprehend not merely the immediate and the most remote effects in time, but the consequences in eternity; for his very definition of virtue is — "the doing good to mankind, in obedience to the will of God, *for the sake of everlasting happiness.*" †

But it is not the impossibility merely of rightly applying the criterion of the divine will, that we complain of in this theory; — we regard the definition given of virtue as at once too limited in its field, and too selfish in its motive. It is too limited in its field: — for certainly there are many things that properly belong to virtue, which cannot, without an undue extension of the meaning of terms, be brought under the description of "doing good to mankind." It is too selfish in its motive: — for, while we are far from assenting to the extravagant and visionary system, (a system contradicted alike by the common sense of mankind and by the whole tenor of Scripture)

* Mor. and Polit Phil. Book II. Chap. viii.

† Ibid. Book I. Chap. vii.

which, by excluding self altogether from consideration in the inducements to virtue, would divest us of that regard to our own happiness, which is an essential part of our constitution, and common to us with all sentient as well as intelligent existence, — yet we conceive that when our own happiness, even although it be "everlasting happiness," is represented as the *only* efficient motive to the practice of it, the motive degenerates from one of duly regulated self-love, to one of absolute selfishness.

In a future Lecture, we shall have occasion to take more particular notice of questions which have been agitated respecting the necessary *disinterestedness* of the principles and motives of religious and moral duty, and the extent to which self-love is admissible in their exercise. In touching on the sentiments of President Edwards, and others of the same school, these questions will come before us. In the meantime, there can be no hesitation in reprobating the selfishness of the principle laid down by Dr. Paley. After explaining, in a manner not very satisfactory, what he means by *obligation*, he says, — "From this account of obligation it follows, that we can be obliged to nothing but what we ourselves are to gain or lose something by; for nothing else can be 'a violent motive' to us. As we should not be obliged to obey the laws, or the magistrates, unless rewards or punishments, pleasure or pain, somehow or other depended upon our obedience; so neither should we, without the same reason, be obliged to do what is right, to practice virtue, or to obey the commands of God." *

In distinguishing between acts of *duty* and acts of *prudence*, he afterwards sums up the distinction thus: —

* Mor. and Polit. Phil. Book II. Chap, ii.

In both the one and the other, "we consider solely what we shall gain or lose by the act;" — and "the difference, the only difference, is this, that in the one case, we consider what we shall gain or lose in the present world; in the other case, we consider also what we shall gain or lose in the world to come."* May we not justly apply to this extraordinary statement, the maxim, *Majus et minus non variant speciem?* † Is not the motive in either case the same in kind? The only difference, avowedly, is in the amount of benefit to ourselves contemplated as the result; from which it follows, that duty, or virtue, is nothing more than a superior measure of prudence. "It is the utility of any moral rule *alone*," says Dr. Paley, "that constitutes the obligation to it:" — "Private happiness is our motive; and the will of God our rule." It is admitted, that, from his nature, God can command nothing but what is fitted to promote the happiness of his creatures; that every precept of such a Being must be not only "holy and just," but "good." But still, it is fearful for a creature thus to shrink into the littleness of self, and to calculate all his obligations to do the will of his Creator and Sovereign *solely* by casting up the account of personal benefit. There is something ungenerous and ignoble in such a system, from which the mind recoils with shame.

Even on the supposition that the sole consideration which dictated the commands of the Godhead, was the happiness of his creatures, it might reasonably have been expected, that those creatures, animated by the impulse of a generous gratitude, sensible of the benevolence to

* Mor. and Polit. Phil. Book II. Chap. iii.

† "The *degree* of a thing makes no difference in its *nature*."

which they were thus indebted, should, *on this very account*, have felt themselves bound to make the glory of their all-gracious Ruler their chief aim, and to act under the influence of this motive as their most powerful impulse. If *he* sought *their* happiness, *they* should seek *his* honor. If benevolence commanded, piety should obey. The creature who can discover no ground of obligation but in summing up the columns of self-interest, (no matter whether for time or for eternity, the principle being the same,) is not actuated by piety; for he is giving self the preference to God; placing his own benefit above the divine glory; professing to obey God's will, but converting the profession into an empty compliment, by rendering the obedience from an exclusive regard to his own advantage. I like not this mercantile morality, — this pounds-shillings-and-pence system of obligation and duty. I come still to the same conclusion: — that, the principles of rectitude necessarily subsisting in the divine character, the commands of Deity to his creatures, were necessarily in conformity with them; — that the grounds of moral obligation lie in the essential, eternal, and immutable nature of these principles, in the relation of the great Creator to his creatures, antecedently to all other considerations; and that the happiness resulting from conformity to his will, which is the same thing as conformity to his character, is as really the native and necessary effect of these principles, as is the infinite and unchanging blessedness of the Creator himself.

In next Lecture, we shall consider the identity of morality and religion.

LECTURE VII.

ON THE IDENTITY OF MORALITY AND RELIGION.

1 JOHN V. 3.

"This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments."

Eternity, immutability, and universality of the principles of morals.

WE have traced the primary elements of morality back to that point where all our researches must inevitably terminate, — the necessity of the divine nature. Beyond this point we cannot go. Of the abstract subsistence of principles, independent of all being whatever, we are incapable of forming any conception; nay, the very attempt to form it involves us in immediate contradiction. There can be no principles without mind; and to annihilate mind is to annihilate principles. — Even the imaginary annihilation of mind, moreover, is beyond our power; for were we capable of realizing in fancy the cessation of all existence but our own, — our own remains, mocking all our efforts at self-extinction. We still survive, in concious being, contemplating the universal desolation which our fancy has made. — Before the commencement of creation, when all being was comprehended in the solitary Godhead, the Infinite Mind was the only seat of all existing principles. The elements of moral rectitude were there, as the necessary character of the necessarily ex-

istent Deity; and we can form no other idea of moral rectitude in his creatures, than as the voluntary communication from himself of the principles of his own all-perfect nature.

The inference is immediate from the necessary underived subsistence of these principles in Deity, that they must be *eternal*, *immutable*, and *universal*. They must be *eternal:* for if their primary and necessary substance was in the mind of the Godhead, to question *their* eternity is to question *his*. They must be *immutable:* for, as the necessity of his existence involves immutability, so does the necessity of the principles of his character; — and, the principles of his character forming the essential elements of moral rectitude, while Deity remains what he is, these elements must possess a corresponding unchangeableness. And from the same premises is derived, with no less certainty, the conclusion of their *universality*. The universe is the product of one Mind. There can be nothing in it, therefore, which, when rightly understood, will be found contradictory. As far as human research has hitherto extended, wisdom and skill have been apparent in all the departments of nature; the increasing light of science, instead of detecting any failures or defects, having progressively illustrated known, and elicited unknown, wonders; and from the uniformity with which every fresh accession to the means of scientific discovery has added to the manifestations of divine intelligence, we reasonably infer, that, could its investigations embrace the whole extent of creation, the result would be still the same. And if we assume infinite intelligence to belong to Deity, there results a still surer hypothetical certainty, that all the productions of that intelligence must be such

as to require knowledge alone on our part to insure the discernment of their excellence.

In the same manner, and with no less confidence, may we reason from the moral principles of the Divine nature, to the substantial identity of the principles of moral rectitude throughout the universe. If we feel assured of universal consistency in the manifestations of his intellectual, we can never hesitate to admit the same assurance in regard to the displays of his moral, character. The assurance in the one case must be even stronger, were it possible, than in the other. Our minds experience a more irresistible revulsion from the supposition of anything like a departure from moral consistency, than they do from the conception (were such conception possible) of a failure in the practical results of mere intelligence.

Difficulty from the existence of moral evil.

I grant the difficulty that here presses itself upon our notice, from the actual prevalence, in our own world, of moral evil. I formerly adverted to the impossibility of reading the lesson of divine holiness from the character of man as it now meets our view; and to the unsatisfactory nature of all the solutions of this anomaly in the administration of a holy and good Being, adopted by either ancient or modern philosophy. — I know few things of greater importance, on this mysterious subject, than to bear in mind the distinction between a *matter of fact* and an *article of faith*. In many minds, I am persuaded, there is more than a tendency to regard the existence of moral evil in the latter of these two lights, — as if it were an article of faith, resting on the authority, and supported by the evidence of the revelation in which it is affirmed. This, however, is a manifest illusion. The manner, it is true, in which sin found its entrance into our world rests exclusively on

the authority of the sacred record. But its existence is a fact in providence, altogether independent of the truth or falsehood of the narrative in Genesis; altogether independent of any human theory, or any divine discovery, of its origin. The Bible assumes the fact of human sinfulness, and proceeds upon it; but it is not the Bible's affirming men sinners, or informing us how they became sinners, that has made them so. It was a fact before revelation existed, and would have continued a fact had no revelation been given. The fact exists, and cannot be reasoned away. The Bible is no more responsible for the entrance of sin, than any history of England is responsible for the gunpowder treason, or for any other plot or deed of wickedness it may record. — So far from being at all the occasion or originator of our perplexities, the Bible contains their only mitigation, their only solution. However puzzled we may be to demonstrate the moral excellences of Deity from the character of human nature in its present state, the discoveries of the Gospel set our minds, in this respect, at rest. These discoveries contain the most satisfactory evidence, that his not interposing to prevent the entrance of sin was not occasioned by any light estimate of its evil, or by any disposition to connive at its perpetration. The nature of the means adopted for its expiation and removal, is infinitely more than sufficient to obliterate any surmise at such connivance, which might be suggested by the fact of its permission. We see him more distinctly and emphatically demonstrated to be "the righteous Lord, who loveth righteousness, and whose countenance doth behold the upright," than if evil had never existed. The testimony of revealed facts, as well as the verbal affirmation of the record, is, that "God is light," and that "God is love."

Beautiful harmony between the character of Deity in nature and providence, and in redemption.

In a former discourse I had occasion to show you, what a perfect harmony there is between the existing facts of God's providential administration towards our world, and the representation given in the Scriptures of its condition as a fallen world; — how precisely the mingled state of suffering and enjoyment, of curse and blessing, which everywhere presents itself to the view of even the most superficial observer, corresponds with what we might *à priori* have anticipated, under the superintendence of a Being, who, though justly offended, still retained the benignity of his nature; the calamities and sufferings of mankind being the judicial visitations of his just displeasure against sin, while the variety and profusion of good enjoyed are the manifestations of lingering compassion for sinners, — the compassion of a Being, who "in wrath remembered mercy."

While in this way the eternal principles of moral rectitude in Deity, the "light" and "love" of the divine nature, are made apparent in his providential administration, there is a further harmony, no less beautiful and interesting, between this manifestation of them and that still higher one which it is the special purpose of revelation to make known. This harmony forms a delightful field of meditative contemplation; and, while it delights, it profits: — it supplies conviction of most important truths, and especially of the identity of the God of providence and the God of redemption, — of the God of nature and the God of revelation. — The harmony of design and operation in the universe, is one of the arguments usually and satisfactorily urged in support of the great doctrine of the divine *Unity*. In surveying and investigating the works of nature in all parts of the world, it is finely remarked by Dr.

Paley,* "We never get among such original or totally different modes of existence, as to indicate that we are come into the province of a different Creator, or under the direction of a different will. The same order of things attends us wherever we go." Now it has often occurred to me, that this mode of reasoning might be carried out a little further, on a principle similar to that on which Bishop Butler has constructed his admirable "Analogy." If the discovery, in every department of nature, of the same great principles of operation, satisfactorily proves the whole to have been the contrivance and the work of one Mind;—if, in traversing the universe, we have everywhere the marks of identity in the creating and superintending Intellect, so as "never to feel that we are come into the province of a different Creator, or under the direction of a different will;" let us take another step,—let us pass from nature and providence to revelation, and try whether we do not still trace marks of the same identity,—indications, no less striking and satisfactory, that the discoveries of the Gospel come from the same Being who framed and governs the universe, and especially who conducts the providential administration of our own world.

It is quite obvious, that there must be a harmony between the lessons of nature and providence and the lessons of revelation. If they come from the same God, they cannot be at variance. If they relate to the procedure of the same God, the plans and acts ascribed to him in the latter cannot fail to be in accordance with the principles of character which are shown to belong to him by the former. The two volumes of discovery must, in

* Nat. Theol. chap. xxv.

this respect, correspond with each other. I am far from meaning that revelation is no more than an authoritative republication to mankind of the lessons of nature; — a hypothesis, than which it is not easy to imagine anything more unreasonable. But even in those parts of the divine administration which are *peculiar* to revelation, and which it is the special province and design of revelation to unfold, there must be nothing contrary to the intimations of the divine character conveyed in nature and in providence.

It is in one point only that we can touch this interesting subject. I have no argument with the man, who can peruse the Bible without finding and acknowledging that its grand peculiarity is the discovery of a scheme of redemption and restoration for our fallen race. I enter not into any discussion of the means which this scheme unfolds for accomplishing the end; — although I am sensible the consideration of them would materially aid the development of my present point. I simply ask, What are the lights in which the formation and execution of the purpose of saving man place the divine character? The salvation itself, avowed in the revealed purpose of God, is a salvation from guilt and punishment to pardon and life, and from the pollution and degradation of sin to the beauty, and dignity, and felicity of holiness. The points of view in which it most conspicuously sets the character of God are two, — his *purity* and his *mercy*. It affirms with equal emphasis, by practical manifestation, "God is light" and "God is love." Now, this double view of the divine character is precisely what we are taught respecting it by the true state of things in nature and in providence. There, as we have before shown you, the Supreme Ruler appears, first, as hating sin; his hatred of it being attested in every form of suffering to

which the world is subject: and secondly, as benevolent and beneficent to his creatures, even in the very midst of their trespasses, — "kind to the unthankful and to the evil," — pouring down the showers of his blessing on the thankless soil, that yields him nothing in return but briers and thorns. — When, therefore, having found in all the departments of nature the indications of the divine unity, we pass from these into the region of redemption, do we feel (to use the language of Paley) as if *now* we had come "into the province of a different Being, and under the direction of a different will?" No; — no more than in passing from one department in creation to another. There is still one God. The God of redemption is the same as the God of creation and of providence. The volume of salvation reads us the very same lessons concerning him as those that are read by us in the volume of nature, — only more clearly, and more impressively; lessons of his righteousness and of his mercy, of his light and of his love.

It is a beautiful image, by which Cudworth demonstrates from the harmony of the universe the necessary origination of the whole, in all its variety of parts, from one all-comprehensive Mind: — "As he that hears a concert of musicians playing a lesson of six or eight several parts, all conspiring to make up one harmony, will immediately conclude that there is some other cause of that harmony besides those several particular efficients, that struck the several instruments; for every one of them would be but a cause of his own part which he played; but the unity of the whole harmony, into which all the several parts conspire, must needs proceed from the art and musical skill of some one mind, the exemplary and archetypal cause of that vocal harmony, which was but

a passive print or stamp of it: — so, though the atheist might possibly persuade himself, that every particular creature was the first author or efficient of that part which it played in the universe, by a certain innate power of its own; yet all the parts of the mundane system conspiring into one perfect harmony, there must of necessity be some one universal mind, the archetypal and exemplary cause thereof, containing the plot of the whole mundane music, as one entire thing made up of so many several parts within himself." *

Redemption is but adding a new part to this anthem of universal nature. It introduces no jarring note; it only elevates, enriches, and sweetens the harmony. Or, if you will, it is itself a distinct symphony, yet so attuned to the other, as, without silencing and without disturbing it, to swell above it, in strains of heavenly sublimity and pathos, that "take the prisoned soul and lap it" in the ecstacy of pure devotion to that "one universal Mind" of whose excellences it is the worthy celebration. — The "songs and choral symphonies" of those "sons of light who circle God's throne rejoicing," † and whose anthem, is, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing!" are so far from being out of harmony with the anthem of nature, that nature universally, continuing the notes of her own anthem, adopts the theme and the words of the angelic choirs; "every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and in the sea, — even all that are in them," being heard, in response to the "ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands," saying, "Blessing and honor,

* Etern. and Immut. Moral. pp. 177 — 179. † Milton.

and glory and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever!"

And while there is thus a perfect harmony between the voice of redemption and the voice of *nature*, in regard to the God whom they both reveal; there is the same harmony between redemption and the phenomena of *providence*. That which is seen with comparative obscurity in God's general administration towards our world, — the union, namely, in the Divine Ruler, of holy righteousness with inexhaustible goodness, appears, in all its clearness of manifestation and fullness of glory, in the purpose and execution of the scheme of redemption; — and appears with a radiance, of which it is difficult to say whether the sweetness or the brilliance predominates, — whether it most attracts by its loveliness or awes by its grandeur. The one transaction of Calvary combines the lessons of God taught by all the diversified operations of nature and dispensations of providence. The cross speaks the double language of justice and of grace, of offended holiness and relenting mercy. It thus identifies with the intimations of providence. It speaks the same language, on the one hand, as the tempest, the volcano, the pestilence, the famine, and all the varieties of human woe: and the same, on the other, as the exhilarating, warming, fructifying sun, the rains and the dews of heaven, and all the luxuriance of the productive earth. — Thus redemption, and creation, and providence, evince themselves to be only varied manifestations of the same Infinite Mind. They show a common origin from the one great "exemplary and archetypal Cause." The word of God corresponds with his works; and redemption, by its very harmony with all the other manifestations of the Godhead, becomes an additional proof of the Divine unity!

Further: — As there is a necessary harmony between the divine *character* and the divine *will*, whatever contains in it an intimation that "God is light" and that "God is love," may be regarded as containing in it also a voice to all his intelligent creatures — "Be ye holy, for I am holy;" — "be ye merciful, as your Father who is in heaven is merciful." This is, in truth, the sum of human virtue, and the sum of the motives to the practice of it: and this, were the ears of men but upon to hear it, is the concurrent voice of providence and of revelation. — By this remark I am naturally led to the proper subject of the present discourse, — the identity of morality and religion; a subject which the preceding observations have not only been intended to introduce, but in part, prospectively, to illustrate.

The text a distinct expression of the identity of religion and morality.

The words which I read as my text express, with clearness and emphasis, this identity; — "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." The "keeping of God's commandments" is a comprehensive definition of morality: — "the love of God" is the sum of religious principle: — and the text affirms, "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." The meaning is, that there is no love of God without the keeping of his commandments; and that there is no keeping of his commandments without love to God: a statement which amounts to the same thing as this other, — that there is no religion without morality, and that there is no morality without religion. He who loves God keeps the commandments in principle; he who keeps the commandments loves God in action. Love is obedience in the heart; obedience is love in the life. Morality, then, is religion in practice; religion is morality in principle.

I know few things more preposterous in theory, or more mischievous in effect, than the prevailing divorce between religion and morality; the manner in which they are not only spoken of in the current vocabulary of the world, but even treated in the disquisitions of philosophy, as if they were separable and separate things. — As to the world; you cannot but be aware, how indefinite is the meaning of *virtue*, and with what variety of application, but in them all with what convenient vagueness and generality, the designation is bestowed of *a good man*. On 'Change, the good man is the man who has sufficient means, and sufficient honor, to pay his debts. In the ordinary intercourse of life, its most common application is to the relative and social virtues, and especially those which impart confidence between man and man; without which, it is universally felt, the transactions of business would be at a stand, the mutual dependence of men upon each other could have no salutary operation, and the very frame-work of society would be dissolved.

Pernicious effects of their separation, by the world and by philosophers.

These virtues, the virtues of truth, and integrity, and honor, especially when united with generosity, and practical kindness, will secure the designation, although there should be no very rigid adherence to those of temperance and chastity; but if these, in any unusual degree, are united with the former, the man becomes a paragon of goodness, the very best of men, and sure of heaven, if any on earth are. The union described is a rarity, except under the superadded influence of religious principle: — but we shall suppose it. We shall suppose a man personally chaste and sober in his habits of life, amiable in its domestic relations, honorable in all its transactions, veracious in every utterance, and faithful in every trust;

and, withal, humane and generous in his dispositions and practice; — What, it may be asked, can be wished for more? "What lacketh he yet?" I answer in one word — *godliness;* — that which is entitled to the precedence of all these virtues, — nay, more, that which ought to preside over them all, and to infuse its spirit into them all, and without which they are destitute of the very first principle of true morality.

But it is not in the customary phraseology of the world only, and the loose conceptions of which that phraseology is the vehicle, that religion and morality are severed. It is lamentable to find, in the writings of ethical philosophers, the same dissociating principle; — discussions on morals, such as would require no very material alteration to accommodate them to atheism; and even at times in the treatises of philosophical divines, so indistinct a recognition of the basis on which the whole system of ethics ought ever to rest. It is far otherwise in the Holy Scriptures: — and I cannot but regard the manner, in this and other respects, in which these writings uniformly treat the subject of morals, as forming one, and not the least considerable, of the internal evidences of their divine original. It is one of the distinguishing peculiarities of all Bible morality, that it *begins with God,* — that it makes *godliness* its first and fundamental principle.* The first commandment in the Moral Code of the Bible is a requisition for God: — "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." Thus God stands first. For him is claimed the throne of the heart. The foundation of all

Union of them in the Scriptures: reasonableness of the union.

* Notes and Illustrations. Note O.

morals is laid in devotion. No right moral principle is there admitted to exist, independent of a primary and supreme regard to Deity. No true goodness is acknowledged without this. There is no such anomaly to be found there, as that which meets us so frequently in the nomenclature of the world's morality, — a good heart, or a good man, without the principles and sentiments of godliness. According to its representations, the religious principle is the first principle of all morals; — a good heart is a heart in which the fear and the love of God reign; and a good man, a man of whose life the love and the fear of God are the uniform regulators. Everything assuming the name of virtue that has not these principles for its foundation, is there set aside, as coin that has not the image and superscription of Heaven, "reprobate silver," — "weighed in the balances, and found wanting."

Now, let reason speak. "Why, even of yourselves," said Jesus on one occasion to the Jews, making his appeal to their own understandings for the truth of what he said, "Why, even of yourselves, judge ye not that which is right?" So say we now. Is not this as it ought to be? Does not the Bible, in the ground it takes, give God his proper place? In making the religious principle the essential element of all goodness, does it not set the system of morality on its legitimate basis? The ground is high; but is it not right? Can you imagine an accredited revelation to have taken any other? Would not the adoption of a lower position, in any book pretending to be from God, have been, of itself, sufficient to discredit and rupudiate its pretensions? I plead for God. We are often told, that relative morality consists in giving every one his due: I object not to the definition; but I must insist upon it, that the application of the definition should

commence at the highest point in the scale of obligation. Is there nothing due from creatures, but to their fellow creatures? Has the everlasting God no dues? Is not reverence his due? Is not love his due? Is not worship his due? Is not obedience his due? It must not be, that we tamely submit to the exclusion of Deity; — to the unnatural and unworthy omission or depreciation of the rights and claims of the Eternal. We cannot acquiesce in his being thus degraded to a secondary station; divested, in any point, of his authority, and thrust out, unceremoniously, from the motives of moral duty. His law, I repeat, as he himself has promulgated it, places him first; and that, not merely because the obligation to God is the first that binds the creature, but because, in this obligation to God, all other obligations originate; they depend upon it; they are comprehended in it. — What are the duties which we owe to our fellow creatures, but integrant parts of his law? It is *as his precepts* that they must be fulfilled; so that, if they are duly done, they must be done from regard to his authority, which amounts to the same thing with their being done *from a religious principle.* It is on this account, that there can be no morality without religion; because every moral duty resolves itself into a dictate of divine authority, and it is only from regard to that authority that it can be duly performed: — for, whatever be the principles that determine the divine will, that will, as I have formerly shown, is the immediate ground of obligation to the creature. — The precepts of the first and second tables of the law come equally under the designation of moral duties. The obligation to the one and to the other is the very same. The man who obeys his parents, who keeps

his word, who pays his debts, who dispenses his charities, who performs any other acts, under the influence of principles that rise no higher than to a recognition of the claims of his fellow creatures, has the first principles of moral obligation yet to learn.

Illusory substitution of Nature for God.

It is to be feared, that, in the department of morals as well as in that of natural philosophy, there is an illusion by which, through the atheistical tendencies of the heart, (perhaps, in some instances, almost unconsciously,) not a few minds are misled. The illusion to which I refer arises from the substitution of the word *Nature* for God. In the disquisitions of the natural philosopher, this description of *prosopopœia* is so prevalent, that there seems at times to be an entire forgetfulness of its being no more than a figure of speech. Nature assumes in the mind an imaginary personality,—like the myterious "plastic power" of some of the ancients;—putting forth voluntary energies, in the production, arrangement, and superintendence of the universe. Nature wills, nature plans, nature acts, nature gives laws and attends to their execution. Nature, in this manner, by the very frequency of the recurrence of such phraseology, instead of being regarded as merely an influence, or the product of that influence, slides imperceptibly into the place which should be occupied by the God of nature; and his immediate and universal agency, "ever present, ever felt," is apt to be forgotten.

Now, thus it also happens in the science of ethics. Moral theorists speak of the dictates of nature, till they, too, are in danger of forgetting "Nature's God." Nature teaches parents to love their children, and children to be dutiful to their parents; nature inculcates truth and hu-

manity; nature reprobates malevolence and falsehood. I am not now speaking of the soundness or heterodoxy of the theology, or of the conformity or disconformity of the statement to fact; but simply of the tendency of the language: and the tendency is much the same in this department as in the former. The laws of nature are spoken of, till it slips out of mind that they are the laws of God; and the real impulse, or the supposed dictate, of nature, assumes the place of the divine will. So far, indeed has this been carried, that by one philosopher, whose theory was formerly under our review, — (the theory according to which virtue and vice are distinguished by the opposite emotions to which, by a kind of moral instinct, they respectively give rise, antecedently, and in order, to the decision of the judgment,) — obedience to the natural impulse is regarded and eulogized as virtue, even in cases where not only is all consideration of the will of God absent from the mind, but God himself is unknown, and demons of hellish malignity are dreaded and worshiped in his room!

"Of all mothers," says Dr. Brown, "who at this moment, on the earth, are exercised, and virtuously exercised, in maternal duties, around the cradles of their infants, there is, perhaps, not one who is thinking that God has commanded her to love her offspring, and to perform for them the many offices of love which are necessary for preserving the lives that are so dear to her. The expression of the divine will, indeed, not only gives us new and nobler duties to perform, it gives a new and nobler delight also to the very duties which our nature prompts, and the violation of which is felt as moral wrong, even when God is known and worshiped only as a demon of

power still less benevolent than the very barbarians who howl around his altar in their savage sacrifice."*

It is admitted by this philosopher, that there is "no question whether it be virtue to conform our will to that of the Deity, when that will is revealed to us, or clearly implied." But while he grants this, he denies that, in order to constitute this conformity virtue, there is any necessity for its being, on the part of the agent, *intentional*. As our nature (our nature as we now inherit it) is, according to him, from God, there may be virtue in acting according to its impulses, although the will and authority of God is never thought of, and consequently, enters not at all into the motive of the action. But this is a species of virtue, which the Scriptures nowhere recognize. They place virtue in the principle; and the principle in which it is made to consist is, distinctly and exclusively, subjection to the divine will. There is nothing to be found in them of such sentimental morality, as that which lies in obeying the impulses of a nature, which, at the very same time, is manifesting its ungodly character, by preferring to the God of purity and love a demon of ferocity and vileness. There is no such separation in them of nature and the God of nature; nor any recognition of aught as genuine virtue, in the motive to which the divine Being has no place.

Abstract virtue is in the Bible *holiness;* which means conformity to the will, or to the character of God; *actual*

* I say nothing of the particular case here selected, — that of maternal fondness; although it belongs to rather an equivocal class of *virtues*, — being one of those instincts of our nature, which are common to us with the brutes, and which, while it is atrociously immoral to resist and violate, it implies no great measure of moral principle to possess.

or *practical* virtue is this conformity in the intention and conduct of the agent; and the whole of this intentional conformity is there represented as springing from the principle of supreme love to the Infinite Source of all excellence. This spiritual principle, this divine affection, must enter into the obedience of every precept; it must not only *be* in the heart, along with its other affections: but it must incorporate itself with all the rest, and impart its sacred and sanctifying impulse to the exercise of every one of them. We dare not, if we follow the Bible, admit the validity of any man's claim to moral character, who regards not the very source and origin of all moral obligation, and the primary object of every moral sentiment; but must disown the very association of morality with such a character, as a solecism in language. *Irreligion* and *moral principle* cannot exist together in the same bosom; for irreligion is the rejection of that authority in which all moral obligation has its origin:—and to live *without God* is necessarily to live *without virtue*."*

The state of the heart toward God entered but little into the systems of heathen Ethics. How could it? The true God was unknown; and towards the "gods many and lords many" of their Pantheon, love was out of the question. These deities were either themselves the creations of ignorant or guilty fear, a fear utterly alien from every sentiment of complacency; or their characters were such, that to love them must have been to love evil rather than good. Love to such beings would have been the principle, not of virtue, but of vice. All the rites in the ceremonial of heathen worship, were of old, and are still, either the expressions of superstitious dread, or the

* Notes and Illustrations. Note P.

direct indulgence, or indirect excitement, of some one or other of the varieties of sensual appetite and earthly passion. Where, amongst the entire assemblage of the gods of ancient or modern polytheism, is there one to be found, whose attributes can give origin or exercise to any such principle as *holy love?* This is an affection of the soul of which the only appropriate object is that infinitely amiable Being whom revelation discloses; and who is also, indeed, visible in the works of his hands and the ways of his providence, but that men, "not liking to retain him in their knowledge," have shut their eyes to the manifestation of his loveliness.

The state of the heart towards God, first in the Bible estimate of moral character, both good and bad.

The first lesson, then, in the elements of moral science, as taught by the Bible, is, that the primary relation of all intelligent creatures being that which they sustain to their Creator, the Creator must be the object of their first love; — and that, the first relation being also the highest, this love must be supreme. And, in conformity with this view of the first principle of moral rectitude in the subjects of the divine government, are all the representations contained in the same book of the essential elements of depravity and wickedness. When the question is asked, Who are *the wicked?* — the answer will be given more or less comprehensively, according to the different standards of character set up in their minds by those who, following the universal propensity of mankind, "measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves amongst themselves." But whilst, in the Scriptures, all the violations of personal purity, and all the infractions of relative obligation between man and man, are denounced as wickedness, there is a higher principle assumed; and all wickedness is summed up in the one

fundamental evil of alienation from God. The "righteous and the wicked" identify with "those who serve God, and those who serve him not." The "wicked," who shall be "turned into hell," are "all the people that forget God." This, in the estimate of heaven, is the grand elementary distinction of human characters. The controversy of the Supreme Governor with man turns essentially on this one point. The righteous are "those that fear God;" the wicked those who have "no fear of God before their eyes." This is the line of demarcation between the two great classes of men into which, in his word, the whole race is divided. On many occasions, it is true, the distinction may be more or less strongly marked by the different modes of conduct, or courses of life, in which the influence or the absence of the fear of God discovers itself; — but still, all the practical differences are resolvable into the possession or the want of this one principle.

According to the intimations of his mind, given us in the volume of revelation, the Ruler and Judge of all never appears as approving or accepting any character, in which this principle does not maintain the ascendant; or as setting the seal of his sanction to any system of moral virtue, of which godliness is not the essential element and impelling spring. And surely, in every considerate mind, in every mind that is not utterly blinded by corruption, there must be a secret conviction that this is right. Why should not the violation of the greatest of all obligations be held as the greatest of all wickedness? When we find (as we sometimes do) among men who make no pretensions to piety, much of the amiable and commendable in the exercise of the social affections, we are apt to shrink from using, or to use with a dubious

hesitancy, the divine designation of the human heart, as "desperately wicked." But why this shrinking? Why this hesitancy? Do we not at once, and indignantly, pronounce the verdict of wickedness on the man who fails of what is due, and who tramples on legitimate claims, in the different relations of life? Do we not apply the epithet without scruple, to the cruel and faithless husband, to the harsh and unnatural parent, to the ungrateful and rebellious child, to the unrighteous and oppressive master, to the faithless servant, to the treacherous friend, to the traitorous subject, to the ruthless tyrant, to the iron-hearted miser, — to every one who flagrantly infringes on the rights of others, and withholds what is due, either in justice, or in generosity? If, then, we imprint the brand of wickedness on the infraction of the inferior obligations, shall we pause and hesitate in affixing it to the breach of the superior? Ought not the violation of the highest of all claims to be branded with the deepest stigma of reprobation? Why is *he* to be counted wicked, who fails to give his fellow men their due, while the designation is tenderly and courteously withheld from him, who in principle denies, or in practice withholds, what is due to his Maker? He demands the heart of every intelligent creature; and it is wickedness to withhold it. He demands the conscience, the obedience, the active service, of every intelligent creature: and it is wickedness to withhold them. His demand takes precedence of every other; and it is wickedness to place others before it. If he is wicked who wrongs men, he is superlatively wicked who wrongs God. And not only is the ungodliness in itself wicked; it is the essential element of wickedness in all that is denominated wicked by ungodly men themselves; nor can any virtue whatever be duly practiced by

the man who is insensible to the sacredness of the very first principle of moral obligation.

Delineate, like the Stoics, your imaginary portraiture of a perfect man: — insert, in their full prominence, all the personal and all the social virtues: — if you have left out *godliness*, you have omitted that which is essential to the rectitude of each one in the series. Or, fill up with all the vices that admit of combination the character of the reprobate; if you have forgotten *ungodliness*, you have left out the very worst of all its ingredients of evil. Throughout the entire catalogue, there has run a breach of obligation superior to any of the rest, and one that has constituted the chief part of the heinousness of them all. Every heart is a wicked heart, every life a wicked life, that is without the fear of God. I ask again, Is not this right? Is it not what on all reasonable grounds was to be expected, that, in a divinely dictated system of morals, the first claim on the creature should be on behalf of the Creator? — the first requisition, that the heart should be "right with him?" Is there not a propriety, a seemliness, a *fitness* in this, such as commands the immediate assent of every understanding, and ought to command the equally immediate concurrence and complacency of every heart? And is there not, at the same time, a sublimity and grandeur in this scriptural representation? — in directing the eyes and the hearts of all intelligent creatures, first and ever, to that ineffable Being, who is the source of all existence, of all excellence, and of all happiness; and making love to him the grand principle of union in the moral universe; his authority the rule, his glory the end, his goodness the motive, his favor the bliss, and his character the example, of the whole rational creation?

Duty summed up in love to God and love to our neighbor.—Connection between them.

According to the Scriptures, then, there is no morality without religion; for, of the two great principles in which the law of God is summed up, the first is the religious principle. And it stands first, not as insulated from the other, and capable of being neglected while the other is duly obeyed; but as demanding the first attention, and indispensable to that moral state of the heart which is necessary to any acceptable obedience whatever. "The second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." It is like unto it, because the principle it inculcates is still love. But love to the Creator takes precedence of love to the creature; nor can love to the creature be duly exercised apart from love to the Creator. The former presupposes the latter. Benevolence to man must be founded in devotion to God. Fraternal affection presupposes filial; the love of brothers to each other springing from their love, as children, to a common parent. These two principles may be considered as embracing all religion and all morality: — but the religion is morality, and the morality is religion. Love to God includes love to man; because love to man is one of the commandments of God, and "this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments;" — and love to man presupposes love to God; because it is as one of the commandments of God that love to man must be cultivated and exemplified, and it is only from the principle of love to God that any one of his commandments can be duly and acceptably obeyed. Let us briefly consider each of these two comprehensive affections, and their mutual relation to each other.

Ingredients of love to God.

Love to God, though one affection, includes in it, especially, the three following things — COMPLACENCY IN THE DIVINE CHARACTER, GRATITUDE

FOR THE DIVINE GOODNESS, AND DELIGHT IN THE DIVINE HAPPINESS.

1. *Complacency in the divine character.* — The character of God is the perfect concentration of all holy excellences; and complacency in this character can only be experienced by a mind that is in unison with the divine. God is necessarily the highest object of complacent delight to himself, — his own infinite excellence to his own infinite mind. He is himself at once the subject and the object of this complacency: in himself it exists, and on himself it terminates. Nothing short of infinite excellence can give scope for infinite delight; so that the infinite mind of Deity could not have a full expansion, or a perfect gratification, of its capacities of enjoyment, except as exercised upon himself. Every holy creature, — every creature formed in the image of God, participates with him, by a sympathy of its whole moral nature, in this delight. And what is the regeneration of a sinner, but the restoration to his soul of this complacency in God, this sympathy with the divine delight in the divine excellence? Love to God is love to him for *what he is*, and for *all* that he is. It must regard him in his entire character. A man may have a diseased eye, that feels easy only when it rests on one or other of the primary colors of rainbow light; that is partial to the red, the orange, the yellow, the green, the blue, the indigo, or the violet, but cannot bear the streaming radiance of the white light that is composed of all the seven: — so may a creature have a diseased and vitiated mind, partial to some particular attribute or mode of the divine character, taken out of connection with the rest, and therefore erroneously and falsely viewed; and incapable of enduring the full effulgence of divine perfection, in the harmony

1. Complacency in the divine character.

of its inseparable attributes. But to a creature retaining its original character, there is not only no difficulty in the exercise of this complacency, — it is its very nature; it is the element in which it "lives and moves, and has its being."

2. Gratitude for divine goodness.

2. *Gratitude for the divine goodness.* — Every existing creature owes to its Creator all that it is, and has, and hopes for; and from every creature that is capable of knowing God, gratitude is due to him for its being and its well-being. The complacency of which we have been speaking is love to God for what he is, and for the benevolence of his nature as manifested to creation in general: gratitude is love to him for his kindness *to us;* to us personally; to us relatively; — as members of families, of circles of kindred, of communities, of the race of mankind, — nay, we might stretch the associating feeling of relation still further, and say, of the whole rational and sensitive creation, considering ourselves as part of the great system of being, sustaining a connection, and conscious of a sympathy, with all that thinks, and feels, and breathes.

In proportion as we are under the influence of benevolence to others, we shall love God as the beneficent Author of all the good that creatures throughout the universe enjoy: — but still, from the very constitution of our nature, our grateful love must ever be most fervent for the blessings of which we ourselves are the recipients. The sacred word is full of the devout utterance, both of the general feelings of gratitude and praise to the blessed Author of all good, and of the special aspirations of thankfulness for appropriate personal favors.

3. Delight in divine happiness.

3. *Delight in the divine happiness.* — They, I think, are perfectly correct, who hold that

Deity may be one, and ought to be the first of the objects of benevolence or good will, in the bosoms of his intelligent offspring. Some would exclude benevolence from the feelings of creatures towards God, on the ground that he cannot need it. But this, however seemingly specious, is far from being conclusive. The sentiment of good will does not at all arise from any perception or supposition of the need of its exercise existing in its object. The more fully a fellow creature possesses, within himself, powers, and capacities, and means of enjoyment, the more independent does he become for his enjoyment upon others. Yet, if he be a creature sustaining a character that entitles him to esteem and affection, this fullness of resources, this approach to independence, does not in the least interfere with our feelings of benevolent satisfaction in his happiness. The more complete, on the contrary, that happiness is, the better pleased are we with the knowledge that it does not depend upon others, or even upon ourselves. — The sentiment of which I speak is sympathy with the joy of other beings — "rejoicing with them that rejoice." By every right-hearted creature, this sympathy must be experienced, in all its purity, and in all its intensity, with the blessedness of Deity. This will be the case, as far as a conception can be formed of the nature and sources of that blessedness; — and, even where that conception fails, the general assurance that the blessedness is infinite, will, to such a creature, be exquisitely delightful. He feels that he cannot but return the love that hath given him being; — he cannot but rejoice in his Maker's joy, — in the absolute, unmingled, independent, and immutable blessedness of the Father of all, — whether flowing from his own exhaustless self-sufficiency, or from the accomplishment of the purposes of his goodness

and righteousness. How pure, how sublime, how ennobling, my brethren, this sentiment of sympathy with the divine happiness! — a sentiment by which we enter into the heart of Deity, and hold a communion of holy delight with the eternal Fountain of life and joy. Higher in honor, higher in enjoyment, no created nature can possibly be raised.

The love of our neighbor.

It is impossible, I have already observed, that love to God, which has been thus described, can exist and operate in any mind, but in proportion as that mind is in a state of moral unison with the mind of the Godhead; and, wherever this is the case, the "keeping of God's commandments" will (as our text intimates) be its unfailing indication. Holy love being the essential element of the divine character in relation to his creature, — love, that is, unassociated in the remotest degree with any complacency in evil; similar love to fellow creatures will necessarily characterize every mind that is conformed to that of Deity. Having fixed the first and all-comprehensive principle of morals in love to himself, he accordingly places in immediate subordination to it, love to men; a love which, although subject to the peculiar modifications of consanguinity, and friendship, and patriotism, comprehends the species, and, indeed, in the spirit of the precept, may be considered as extending to created beings in general, in known or even in supposed existence. The standard of the love enjoined to our fellow creatures is expressed in the terms of the precept — "Thou shalt love thy neighbor *as thyself*." The only love that is without measure, and without comparison with any other as its standard, is the love of which the infinite Jehovah is himself the object. That is love "with all the heart, with all the soul, with all the strength, and

with all the mind," because here all our capacities of intellect and of feeling may be expanded to their full stretch of enlargement, without the possibility of excess. All other love is measured and limited.

Selfishness is the besetting sin of our fallen nature. It interferes with and adulterates the love of our neighbor; it excludes from our bosoms the love of God. But *self-love*, so far from being an illegitimate principle, is an essential part of the constitution of every sentient existence, and in the second great commandment is assumed as such, and constituted, as has just been said, the standard of our love to others. The reasoning of the Apostle Paul is beautifully correct, when he says, "He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet: and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."* In its heart-searching spirituality, its precision and simplicity, its readiness for application, its force of united appeal to the understanding and to the heart, its comprehensiveness, both as to the objects it embraces, and the dispositions and conduct it inculcates towards them, this precept is divinely worthy of the place it holds.† Taking love to God and love to our neighbor together, well might our divine Master say of them, "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

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* Rom. xiii. 8—10.

† Notes and Illustrations. Note Q.

Necessity of the union of both principles to true morality.

But let not our main point be at present forgotten. To constitute true morality, the two must be united. The second is not morality without the first. Men may choose, for the accommodation of their own consciences, to separate them under different designations, and to call the one religion and the other morality. But we dare not, on the principles that pervade the Word of God, admit the possibility of their separation. You may many a time find men who commend the second precept, while they disregard the first; who will even warmly eulogize the beautiful morality of the Scriptures, when they sum up our duty in "loving our neighbor as ourselves," and "doing to others as we would that others should do to us." Yet what would such men say to us, were we to affirm that the first of the two precepts might be satisfactorily fulfilled without the second? — that a man might duly love God without loving his neighbor, and do his duty to God without doing his duty to his neighbor? Would they not, and with good reason, scoff at such religion, and tell us at once, with oracular decision, and with the scowl of disdain, that there can be *no religion without morality?* We grant it: there *is*, there *can be*, no religion without morality. But we must insist upon it, that, if the first precept cannot be fulfilled separately from the second, neither can the second separately from the first; that if we cannot love God without loving our neighbor, neither can we duly love our neighbor without loving God; that if love to God wants its proper *evidence* without love to our neighbor, love to our neighbor wants its proper *principle* without love to God; that no position can be more unreasonable, than the position, that there may be morality without religion, while there can be no religion

without morality; this being the same thing as to say, that the lower obligation may be fulfilled without the higher, though the higher cannot without the lower; that the love commanded towards fellow creatures may be duly and sufficiently exercised without any love to Him by whom the command is given, and in whose character and authority the obligation to render it originates! Away with such inconsistencies! Let Christians assume, and occupy, and resolutely maintain, the high ground of the Bible; that LOVE TO GOD not only takes precedence of every other affection of the soul, but is the TRUE MORAL PRINCIPLE OF ALL THE REST, and of whatever in practice is entitled to the name of virtue. This love to God, involving, as it does, complacency in his holy nature, is itself holiness; and this is the virtue of the Bible; the only virtue that can be recognized and accepted by the God of light and love whom the Bible reveals; the product of his regenerating Spirit; the necessary qualification for fellowship with him on earth; the only fitness for heaven!

LECTURE VIII.

ON THE QUESTION, HOW FAR DISINTERESTEDNESS IS AN ESSENTIAL QUALITY IN LEGITIMATE LOVE TO GOD.

1 JOHN IV. 10.

"We love Him, because he first loved us."

Scripture views of God.

THERE are four short sentences of Holy Writ, which contain in them more of the knowlege of God than all the unaided wisdom of man had ever been able to discover: — "GOD IS A SPIRIT:" — "GOD IS ONE:" — "GOD IS LIGHT:" — "GOD IS LOVE." Spirituality of essence, unity of subsistence, purity of nature, and benevolence of character, are thus, with a sublime brevity, predicated of Jehovah. Light and love complete the character of his *moral* nature. They are inseparable. All the operations of his benevolence are in harmony with his unsullied purity: and all the manifestations of his purity, are blended with his infinite benevolence. The love dwells in light; and the light diffuses itself in beams of love. HOLY LOVE, then, is the essential character of the Godhead. And, in accordance with this delightful view of the Maker and Lord of all, holy love appears to be the general law of the universe, the bond of union, the spring of action, the fountain of joy.

We have formerly traced the great principles of moral rectitude to their eternal origin in the nature of Deity, — a nature, from eternity, necessary and immutable. From this we have inferred their universality. As all orders of intelligent creatures owe their being to Him, and are the subjects of his moral government, it is, in the nature of the thing, inconceivable, that in the principles of his legislation, among these different orders, there should be any inconsistency or contrariety. In their essential elements, they must be the same. But the same general principles may often, without incongruity, admit of no inconsiderable variety of modification. Thus it is in the natural world. There is one principle of vitality in all that lives; yet, among all living things, there probably are not two in every respect the same. There is one principle of vegetation in all the endless variety of color, form, and fragrance, of elegance, and beauty, and utility, with which the surface of our world is clothed. For aught we can tell, the same principles of animal and vegetable life, which develop themselves in our own planet, may pervade the universe; and yet, in no two worlds may their modified developments be entirely alike.

Universality of the principles of moral rectitude consistent with variety of modification.

Thus too, as far as our knowledge reaches, it *is*, — and thus, to an indefinite extent beyond the range of our knowledge, it *may be* in the *moral* world. My exemplifications of what *is*, must of course be found among ourselves; they must be taken from our own race. It would, at the same time, be flagrantly inconsistent with all that has formerly been said, were I to take them from the race at large, as inheriting a nature of which the moral principles are disordered. I find them more appropriately, and extensively enough for my present purpose, in those

renewed souls, into which, by the gracious operation of the Divine Spirit, the true elements of moral rectitude have been introduced; — in which *holy love* has become the supreme and dominant principle. Among the members of this redeemed and sanctified family, there are almost endlessly diversified modifications of character: — but these modifications are the result, not of different principles, but of principles the same in their primary elements, only practically unfolded under various circumstances and relations. If, in all the children of God, the principles of their new nature were the same in degree as well as in kind, and subjected universally to the influence of the very same modifying circumstances, — the result would be a sameness very dissimilar to what meets our view in every other department of the works and ways of God. But by placing his children in all the varieties of circumstantial and relative condition, their heavenly Father produces a scene in harmony with the rest of his administration; diversity of effect springing from simplicity of principle, — elementary indentity, with varied manifestation. Thus we may conclude it to be, throughout the entire extent of the dominions of Deity: — the essential elementary principles of morals everywhere the same, — as necessarily the same, as the Nature is the same from which all intelligent and accountable existence is an emanation, — but in all worlds, and among the inhabitants of each, diversified without end in their modal application and exercise.

Character and condition of other worlds to us unknown.

Whether among the countless worlds enlightened by those millions of suns which the telescope has brought within the reach of human vision, there be any in a similar condition to that of our own, is a question to which no research can ever enable

us to find an answer; He from whom alone the discovery could come having been pleased to keep silence respecting it. In the revelation, indeed, which he has graciously imparted to us, he has informed us of another order, or rather of a portion of another order, of intelligent creatures, who, like ourselves, sustain the character of apostates; spirits of light, who, even before the creation of man, had wickedly thrown off their allegiance, and incurred the righteous doom of expulsion from their seats of bliss. The same revelation, while it discloses to us the divine scheme of restoration for fallen men, conveys the information that no such scheme has been formed or executed in behalf of fallen angels. The reasons of this preterition are by us inscrutable. That here, as in every step of his government, the procedure of Deity has been determined by considerations infinitely satisfactory, we cannot entertain a doubt; his sovereignty consisting, as ought ever to be remembered, not in acting without reasons, but only in withholding, at his pleasure, those reasons from us. It is ours to be thankful, (and the gratitude can never bear any adequate proportion to the amount of the obligation,) that our world has been the theatre selected by him, for that display of his character, so full of all that is stupendous and delightful, which the plan of redemption unfolds.

God's conduct toward our world a fair standard of his general administration.

The procedure of God towards this our world has, indeed, been of a nature so astonishing, that, in contemplating it, we are apt to be stunned into incredulity; and, forgetting the infinitude of the benevolence of which it is the expression, to say in our hearts — How can these things be? — And yet, their overwhelming magnitude may not, by any means, be a sufficient warrant for a conclusion to which

we are prone to come, and which, indeed, has assumed, in most Christian minds, the form of a settled sentiment, — namely, that they are quite *unique*, — that they so pre-eminently transcend all the divine transactions in other parts of the universe, as to stand altogether alone, — having no parallels, — nothing that can be compared with them. Now it is true, that we cannot imagine them surpassed: but are we sure that we are doing justice to Deity in this conception of their solitary grandeur, — of their incomparable superiority to the average scale of his moral administration? Is the principle of such a conception fair? Is it in harmony with our inferential conclusions in other departments of the divine doings? Amazed as we are by the displays of power and wisdom in the productions of nature, animate and inanimate, within the bounds of our own world, does it ever enter into our minds to regard them as so far surpassing those which, had we access to other worlds, we should discover there, that, by the enlargement of our range of observation, our conceptions of these divine attributes might possibly be depressed rather than elevated, contracted rather than amplified? Do not we, on the contrary, assure ourselves, that, were that range extended, we should find, in every department of its widening amplitude, all in harmony with what meets our view within our limited field of vision; — the manifestations of power and wisdom, if not surpassing, at least not inferior to, those which are not submitted to our investigation? Why, then, should we reason otherwise with regard to the moral administration of Deity?

Of his procedure, in this department, towards other worlds than our own, we know nothing, and have no means of arriving at information. But can any satisfactory reason be assigned, why we should not apply the

same principle of inferential judgment, and, in this case as in the other, make what we do know the standard of what we do not know? Why should we not consider the conduct of the Godhead towards our world as a specimen of the general style of grandeur in which the divine government is administered thoughout the whole extent of his universal empire? There may be nothing the same in kind. With the one exception of the "angels that kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation," there may be no class of intelligent creatures that have renounced their allegiance besides ourselves, — no world that has strayed from its moral orbit, but the planet in which we dwell. But, though there may be nothing the same in kind, it does not follow that there can be nothing like it in characteristic greatness. In an extensive human empire, subdivided into various provinces, the transactions in no two of these provinces may be in every respect the same. They may, — and under a wise administration they undoubtedly will, be of a nature appropriate to the respective circumstances of each. But they will all bear the impress, and indicate the character, of the presiding mind; and, corresponding with the mental capacity and the moral disposition of the ruler, they will harmonize, in their general complexion, with each other. So it may be in the empire of the supreme Governor, — the universe of worlds. Make the supposition, if you will, that there is no other world standing in the same circumstances with our own, and requiring the same or similar measures for its deliverance; — yet there appears to be no presumption in conceiving, that, throughout his boundless dominions, the infinite God may be carrying on his administration on a scale of moral magnificence, of which the dealings of his righteousness and mercy to-

wards our race, in the mediation of his Son, are no more than a fair exemplification. How stupendous the conception given to our minds by such a criterion (is it an inadmissible one?) of the government of THE ETERNAL!

Wisdom of God in confining the discoveries of revelation to our own world.

The revelation with which we have been favored relates, as might have been anticipated, specially, and almost exclusively, to the peculiar circumstances of our own world. To inform us about other worlds, is no part of its design. Even as things are, there exists quite a sufficiency of temptation to the neglect of our everlasting interests;—quite enough to divert our attention from those momentous concerns by which it ought most of all to be engaged. In the objects by which we are surrounded on earth, and which in so many ways entice our regards, there is an infatuating witchery, that works with lamentable success, in abstracting our thoughts from what is higher, and better, and more enduring; the "things that are seen" filling the mind, to the exclusion of the "things that are not seen:"—and even the little that, by observation and research, has come to be either known, or conjectured, or fancied within the limit of possible discovery, with regard to other worlds, has had, in this respect, its share of detrimental influence; so that there have not been wanting, those who have fully verified the poet's description of them as—

> ——— ——— "giving laws to distant worlds,
> And trifling in their own."

To what an amount might such "trifling" have been augmented, had revelation opened more widely the field of curious speculation, by informing us of the physical constitution, the natural history, the science, and the

moral character and state, of the worlds by which we are surrounded! The tendencies of our fallen nature to the neglect of our everlasting prospects, are so sadly strong, that they require anything but encouragement and additional temptations; and, accordingly, in the revelation given us, our attention is wisely confined to the one great end which it proposes, — not the gratifying of a vain, or even of an allowable and laudable curiosity with regard to other worlds, but the recovery to God, and holiness, and happiness, of the apostate inhabitants of our own.

Character under which revelation addresses men, that of sinners.

This being the case, I know few things more important, or indeed of more obvious necessity, in order to the right understanding of this revelation, than that it be read and studied by us, under the character, and in the relation to God, in which it addresses us. It cannot be understood otherwise. If it is intended for mankind as sinners, — fallen, guilty, and condemned, — how can any correct conceptions be formed of the adaptation of its discoveries to their situation, unless the reality of that situation be first recognized? If the gospel be a remedial scheme, the world is in a condition that requires the remedy; and neither can the suitableness of the remedy be discerned, nor its value duly appreciated, further than the condition itself is understood and experienced.

Necessity of regarding not only common principles, but special modifications of them.

But, more than this. We have said, that while the great principles of morals must necessarily be the same in all worlds, yet of these principles the modifications may be different in different worlds, according to the peculiar circumstances and relations of their respective inhabitants. In each world, therefore, the legitimate exercise of the principles must be that which harmonizes with its dis-

tinctive peculiarities. Everything else must partake of the spirit of rebellion against that Supreme Disposer by whom these peculiarities are adjusted. This is clear. The inhabitants of a revolted province, in any empire, must submit to the conditions on which the government has determined that their restoration to their privileges as subjects shall be granted, and on which their new acts of allegiance shall be received. The refusal of these conditions, under what pretext soever, is a persisting in treasonable disaffection. If our world be a world of rebels, and the universal Governor has been pleased to reveal the way, the only way, in which these rebels can be reinstated in his favor, and their acts of homage can be accepted, it assuredly follows that *with us* (whatever may be the case with other parts of his dominion) there can be no true allegiance, no acceptable subjection, no rightly principled obedience, until there is an acquiescence of heart in the prescribed terms.

If God has revealed himself *to sinners*, all the service of sinners must be rendered to him *as so revealed*. If, as sinners, we are in a state of alienation from him, and he has been pleased to make known the grounds on which he himself stands reconciled, and ready to receive us back to our allegiance, the first thing to which we are called, and which is manifestly indispensable, is our acceding to those grounds, and accepting the reconciliation. If the means revealed be the atonement and intercession of a Mediator, how can he who has so revealed himself accept the homage of creatures so circumstanced, otherwise than through that Mediator? The sole question is the question of fact. If the fact be admitted, I see not how the conclusion can be evaded. It will not do for us to take our stand on general principles, and disregard the specialities of our

condition; — for it is in submission to those modifications of the general principles for which these specialities have given occasion, that our regard to the principles themselves, as the principles of the divine government, is to be appropriately manifested. We persist in our insubordination to the principles themselves, so long as we refuse submission to those means which the Supreme Governor has prescribed, for maintaining the perfection and permanence of their authority, and preserving unsullied the character of his administration. It is in this way that the rejection of the gospel identifies, in the principle of it, with rebellion against the law.

Primary principle of love to God, — how affected by the peculiarity of our condition.

We have before seen, that the first great principle of the law, and the essential element of all true morals, — is *love to God.* And here too, it is evident, the peculiarity of our condition must modify the exercise of this primary principle. The gracious purpose of the mediatorial scheme of the gospel is to bring sinners back to God. But the love of a sinner, in returning to God, must of necessity regard him as he has revealed himself; — it must regard him as the "God of salvation," — as "in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." A due consideration of this might go far, perhaps, to settle a question in Christian morals of no trivial importance; the question, namely, whether love to God must be entirely *disinterested;* — in other words, completely divested, in its exercise, of all consideration of our own happiness, — regarding God exclusively for what he *is in himself,* irrespectively of what he is *to us,* — and unmixed with either the fear of punishment or the hope of reward.

Bearing of this on the question of DISINTERESTEDNESS.

Preliminary remarks on the more general question of the existence of disinterested affections.

The limits of the present discourse will not admit of my entering into any extended discussion, preliminary to my observations on this topic, of the more general question respecting the existence or non-existence in our nature of disinterested affections; — a question, on which, as on most others, there has, on both sides, been a proneness to extremes. That there are two classes of affections within us, — affections of which we ourselves, and affections of which others, are, respectively, the immediate objects, is a matter of fact ascertained by every man's personal consciousness. But the affections which terminate upon others are, equally with those which terminate upon ourselves, *our own* affections. Being our own, the attainment of their respective ends must, of course, be a gratification to ourselves. In this way, every affection that prompts us to seek the good of others must, of necessity, have a reflex as well as a direct influence, — an influence of pleasure tothe bosom in which it is exercised, as well as of benefit to such as are its immediate objects; — the two unavoidably, and therefore invariably, blending together.

But from the fact, that when we do good to others there is a result of pleasure to ourselves, to draw the conclusion that our own gratification is the real and only object of those affections by which we are incited to deeds of kindness, is, in effect, to say, that the more intense the delight which a man experiences in being the instrument of another's happiness, the more decidedly has he "the witness in himself" of his selfish disposition: — in other words, that a man's selfishness is in the direct ratio of his pleasure in doing good: — in other words still, that Howard was the most selfish of human kind! And from this it would seem to be a further legitimate deduction,

that, could a man be supposed to do good to others, without any consciousness of pleasurable emotion from the happiness he imparts, the purer would be his benevolence: nay, still further, that, were it consistent with possibility, that a man should do good to others while the sight or the report of their enjoyment gave him pain, the higher still would be his title to admiration for disinterested philanthropy. And yet such supposed cases involve manifest contradiction; for in either of them, whatever might be the principle from which the good was done, it could not be benevolence; inasmuch as, to have *no pleasure* in others' happiness, is the *negation* of this affection, and to have *pain* from others' happiness is its very *opposite* — is positive malevolence.

The truth of the case, therefore, appears to be, that whenever a benevolent affection is gratified, self-love must also be gratified; simply because the affection gratified being our own, the gratification must be our own: — and to argue from this that benevolence resolves itself into self-love, is to affirm the very existence of a benevolent affection impossible; for it amounts to affirming (and no impossibility can be more complete) that no such affection can have place, unless in a creature so constituted as that, while, under its impulse, he puts forth his efforts for the good of fellow creatures, the satisfaction arising from his success should come back into some other bosom than his own! That selfishness is one of the besetting sins of our fallen nature, I grant; from which it arises, that there may be much of a spurious beneficence, which has its sources in other principles than benevolence; nay, that there may be much even of a spurious benevolence, such as, if closely scrutinized, would be found to contain more in it of self than the agent, negligent of self-examina-

tion, is aware. But still, the existence of the spurious does not disprove the possibility of the genuine. It may be a good reason for self-jealousy; but it is no more. Pleasure having been wisely and kindly attached, by that God who is love, to the exercise of benevolence, are we to restrain its indulgence, and be fearful of satiating ourselves with the luxury of doing good, merely lest some cynical philosopher should tell us we are selfish? Shall we call the Divine Being selfish, because he "delighteth in mercy?" — because the exercise of his infinite love is one of the springs of his infinite blessedness? — because he is happy in the diffusion of happiness? In this respect, every holy creature bears the image of his Creator; and, but for the entrance of sin, benevolence and self-love would have continued to play their respective parts in unjarring and delightful symphony. Could we fancy the suggestion introduced into the mind of such a creature, while, by a generous sympathy, making the happiness of others his own, and enjoying the plentitude of bliss in contributing, by active beneficence, to its diffusion, — that his benevolence was certainly and entirely selfish, because he had pleasure in the indulgence of it, — that he was quite mistaken in fancying himself kind, because he actually delighted in being so; — how strangely would it startle him! how unaccountably odd would the metaphysics appear by which it was dictated! He would in one instance perceive and feel it to be a sophistical quibble. His whole soul would tell him, that the delight in the happiness of others, which was the ground of the sophist's imputation of selfishness, was what constituted the very benevolence whose existence it was alleged to disprove.*

* Notes and Illustrations. Note R.

The observations thus made respecting the inseparable blending of the benevolent affections with those of self-love, we may find, in the spirit of them, capable of application to the question now before us respecting the *disinterestedness* of love to God. Generated originally, as it would appear, amongst the ancient Mystics, the doctrine of the possibility, and of the necessity to true godliness, of such self-denying, self-annihilating love was revived about the middle of the seventeenth century, was adopted by some devout spirits with an enthusiastic fervor, and found an advocate equally amiable and eloquent in the celebrated Fenelon, Archbishop of Cambray. Into the details of the controversy between him and the no less celebrated Bossuet, Bishop of Meaux, — the characters, talents, and tempers of the combatants, the ultimate decision of the controversy by papal bull, against Fenelon, or the alleged influence by which the condemnation of himself and his tenets was obtained, — it was not my purpose to enter. They are points of ecclesiastical history, rather than of ethical system. The doctrine has not been confined to that period or portion of the church. It has had advocates among Protestant theologians of the first rank; among whom it is only necessary to mention the name of Jonathan Edwards, to secure for the subject a grave and deliberate discussion. It shall be my endeavor to avoid extremes on either side, and, with as much simplicity as possible, to elicit what appears to be the truth.

Origin and advocates of the theory of disinterested love.

The text prefixed to this Lecture may be understood consistently with either side of the question; for it is susceptible of two interpretations. It may either signify simply that the love of God to us is the *origin* of our love to him, or that it is the *reason* for which we love him; that is,

either that it is *in consequence of* God's having loved us, that we, by the exercise of his grace, have been brought to love him, or that his previous love to us, is that *on account of* which we love him. The advocates of what has been termed disinterested love to God adopt, of course, the former interpretation; while its opponents maintain the latter. It will appear, I am persuaded, from the views of the question which are now to be presented to you, that the two explanations are not at all incompatible; that both are true; that they are closely connected with each other; and that therefore, without impropriety, both may be comprehended in the statement of the text.

Original and proper ground of love to God, his essential loveliness.

I begin, then, with observing, what does not seem to admit of a doubt, that the true, proper, original ground of love to God is *God's essential loveliness,—the amiableness of his moral nature.* I say of his *moral* nature, for the obvious reason, that his natural attributes are not susceptible of the quality of loveliness, except as connected, in their exercise, with his moral excellencies. Eternity, immensity, omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, are not properly amiable in themselves. It depends entirely on the moral perfections with which they are associated, whether they shall engender love or hatred, horror or delight. "It is a moral excellency alone," says Edwards, "that is in itself, and on its own account, the excellency of intelligent beings. It is this that gives beauty to, or rather is the beauty of, their natural perfections or qualifications. Moral excellency is the excellency of natural excellencies. Natural qualifications are either excellent or not, according as they are joined with moral excellency or not. The holiness of an intelligent creature is the beauty of all his natural perfections. And so it is in God, ac-

cording to our way of conceiving of the Divine Being: holiness is, in a peculiar manner, the beauty of the divine nature."* By holiness we are to understand the whole of God's moral excellence — the entire assemblage of his moral beauties. It is for all these that he is loved by holy creatures. They perceive, they relish, they delight in contemplating, that "beauty of holiness" which consists in their full combination and inseparable union.

Self-love an essential principle in the constitution of all intelligent creatures.

Our next observation is one which was, incidentally and in a different connection, introduced in last Lecture, — that *self-love is an essential principle in the constitution of every intelligent creature;* meaning by self-love the desire of its own preservation and well-being. By no effort of imagination can we fancy to ourselves such a creature constituted without this. It is an original law in the nature of every sentient existence. In man, it is true, in regard especially to the sources from which it has sought its gratification, it is a principle which, since his fall, has been miserably perverted and debased, degenerating, in ten thousand instances, into utter selfishness, and in all partaking of this unworthy taint. Between selfishness, however, and legitimate self-love, there is an obvious and wide discrepancy. The latter is not at all distinctive of our nature as degenerate, but was inwoven in its very texture, as it came from the Creator's hand. The former is properly the corruption of the latter. It leads the creature, who is under its dominant influence, to prefer self to fellow creatures and to God, so as to seek its own real or supposed advantage at the expense of the interests and the honor of both. So far, on

* Treatise on Religious Affections, p. 211.

the contrary, is self-love from being unwarrantable, that, in that part of God's law which prescribes our feelings and conduct towards our fellow creatures, it is assumed as the standard measure of the commanded duty, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor AS THYSELF." Take away self-love, or suppose it possible that the human heart should be divested of it, and you annihilate the command by rendering it unintelligible.

The word of God nowhere requires the relinquishment of this principle, but appeals to it.

There is not, assuredly, any part of the divine word, by which we are required, in any circumstances, to divest ourselves of this essential principle in our constitution. That word, on the contrary, is full of appeals to it, under every diversity of form. Such are all its threatenings, all its promises, all its invitations. What, indeed, is the offer of salvation, in the fullness of its blessings, but an inducement presented to self-love, or the natural desire of happiness, to compliance with the calls of the Gospel? To what principle, if not to this, does Jehovah address himself, when, in terms which are only a specimen of innumerable more, he says, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come unto the waters?"—"Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" may be taken as the spirit of many a kind expostulation, the substance of many an importunate entreaty, the burden of many a "song of the charmer."

Love to God merely for what we receive, not love to God at all.

True, however, as all this is, the truth is not less unquestionable, that love to God *merely* for what we receive from him, *is not love to God at all.* When in no degree is the divine attribute of goodness contemplated in itself, as constituting a part of the moral excellence and loveliness of the Godhead, but solely and exclusively in its aspect towards us, and

in the gifts of kindness which it confers upon us;—this certainly is nothing but unmingled self-love. It is love, not properly to the Giver, but to the gift; or (which, if not precisely, is as nearly as possible the same thing) it is love to the Giver, merely as a giver, for his gift's sake, and not for his own. It terminates entirely on self. There is no denying of this. The illustration of it might be amplified; but it is with *principles* I have at present to do;—and of *this* principle the truth is too self-evident to require or to admit of proof. Gratitude of the kind described will be found in the most selfish specimens of our fallen nature. "If ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them." It is common to man with the brutes.—Where will you find a more striking exemplifications of it, than in a faithful dog to a gentle and generous master?

Such the love produced by false views of the divine character.

Of the description mentioned is that love which you may hear some men profess to God, while they are entertaining and cherishing false views of his character. They flatter themselves into the persuasion of his being "such an one as themselves," who will not, as they express it, be strict to mark their iniquities against them,—who is so very benignant and kind, that he can never find in his heart to condemn and punish, with unrelenting rigor, his frail and erring creatures:—and then they love him! But why? Simply because his character, as they thus conceive of it, bears a flattering aspect towards themselves,—laying them under no necessity to deny their passions, to renounce sin and the world, and to crucify the flesh.—Such love as this is worse than selfish. Selfishness may often have

regard to what is not in itself wrong; but in this love there is the essential principle of depravity. Such men absolutely love God for the sake of sin. It is not God at all that is the object of their love; it is sin; it is this vain and evil world. These they love: and, when they have fashioned to their imaginations a God who will not be severe upon them for the indulgence of this their liking to sin and to the world, they can love him too:—and they can even cherish a delusive self-complacency in the fancy, that, whatever may be the case with others, *they* are very far from being what certain harshly-judging enthusiasts would represent them,—haters of God. But, in very deed, love to this God of their own is hatred of the true God. It is loving him for the opposite of what he is;—it is loving him for that which he hates, on which the eyes of his purity "cannot look," and against which he has denounced the terrors of his wrath!—and could such men but succeed in persuading themselves that God will not visit their sins with punishment *at all*, they would (according to their delusive use of terms) love him still the more.

Distinction between selfish love and generous gratitude.

But, while such gratitude as regards the divine Giver, merely for his gift's sake,—and, if the gift be but obtained and enjoyed, cares not what the character may be of Him from whom it comes,—while such gratitude has in it nothing beyond what is natural, nothing spiritual, nothing gracious,—there being no more grace, or spirituality, or holiness, in the desire of enjoyment, than in the dread and deprecation of suffering:—yet, assuredly, there is such an affection of heart as a truly generous gratitude,—gracious, spiritual, holy gratitude. Wherein, then, lies

the difference between such gratitude and the selfish sentiment of which we have been speaking? Chiefly in this, — that true gratitude is inseparably accompanied with the perception and love of the attribute of goodness in Deity, as a part of his moral excellence, and does not regard it, exclusively, as a source of benefit to ourselves. Even here, I grant, we are in danger of self-deception, and require to watch, with a jealous scrutiny the real state of our hearts; lest, while we flatter ourselves that we are loving the divine benevolence for its own intrinsic amiableness, we be, after all, only pleased with the gift, and influenced by a feeling that rises no higher than natural gratitude, — a principle, which ranks with some others, such as it is odious and criminal to want, but which there is no great measure of positive virtue in possessing. There is a vast amount of self-complacent sentimentalism in regard to the divine goodness, which, if analyzed, would be found to resolve itself into nothing better than fondness for that facile pliancy of disposition, already adverted to, with which imagination has invested the Supreme Being, by which he will be induced to deal very gently with his creatures; a fondness, which is in no degree associated with complacency in his holiness, or love to his general excellence. But what more is there in this, than self-love fashioning the character of the Godhead to a conformity with his own self-flattering predilections? In order to prevent our being the dupes of such self-deception, it ought to be the subject of constant and faithful inquisition in the secret tribunal of our own hearts, whether our professed love to God embraces the whole of his moral excellency, — his purity, as well as his kindness.

Gratitude approved, enjoined, and exemplified in the Bible.

But, while liableness to self-delusion should induce vigilance over our deceitful hearts, let it not carry us too far. We should greatly err, were we to exclude the operation of a principle in itself right, because there is a danger of its being alloyed with the admixture of others of an inferior order, or even of questionable legitimacy. Of appeals to gratitude the Scriptures are full, as one of the springs of active service, and a principle which it is our duty to cherish. "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage," is a consideration appended to I know not how many of the divine commands to Israel by Moses: — and in all the subsequent history of the chosen people, they are incessantly reminded by the prophets of the kindness of Jehovah to themselves and to their fathers, and urged by the remembrance to a suitable requital. And the very same spirit pervades the New Testament. The Apostles, the inspired "ambassadors of Christ," are ever, in their practical admonitions, appealing to the "mercies of God," disclosed so affectingly by the Gospel, as the grand motive by which believers should be influenced, in the "reasonable service" of "presenting their persons living sacrifices unto God," and "glorifying him in their bodies and spirits, which are his." Those parts of the Bible, too, which contain the devout utterance of the believer's heart, are full of the breathings of grateful love, and of the liveliest and most rapturous expressions of adoring thankfulness.

Union of complacency and gratitude the perfection of

In the experience of *holy* creatures, — of creatures, I mean, who have never fallen from their original purity, — these two descriptions of love,

gratitude for God's goodness, and affectionate complacency in all that God is, must ever, we conceive, exist in inseparable union. As holy, they love God for his holiness; as happy, they love God as the Author of their happiness. They experience and contemplate his kindness to themselves, as only an emanation of the infinite benignity that is in his heart, and that subsists there in intimate and indissoluble combination with untainted purity, and inflexible rectitude. In the character of God there is nothing but what perfectly suits the *taste* of a holy creature. He likes it all. He would revolt with horror from the very imagination of its being, in any respect, or in any degree, other than it is. Created himself in the image of God, he loves with his whole soul the divine prototype, the eternal and unchanging reality, of which his own nature is the faint and feeble shadow. In the bosom of such a creature, love to the Author of his holinsss and love to the Author of his happiness cannot by possibility be separated: — for his holiness *is* his happiness. He feels, that He who made him happy, made him happy by making him holy. He delights in God for the spotless loveliness of his moral nature; but he can never dissociate this delight from the view, which he necessarily has before his mind, of the same Being, as his own benefactor and friend. So that, in this manner, holy delight, melting gratitude, and unsuspecting confidence, blend harmoniously together, and form, if we must not say one feeling, yet one most blessed state and habitude of soul.

love in sinless creatures.

In bringing the present inquiry to bear upon ourselves, it is important to be kept in mind that love to God *for what he is* continues the *duty* of every intelligent creature, under every

The obligation to love God remains the same on fallen as on unfallen creatures.

change of character and of circumstances. The obligation of the "first and great commandment" cannot but remain upon all God's rational offspring. Apostasy cannot dissolve it; for, were the obligation cancelled, sin would be at an end. The concentrated essence of all human guilt lies in the want of this love to God. In every thought, and word, and action of fallen man, there is sin, in proportion as there is the absence of this first and only principle of all obedience. It is true, that a depraved creature *cannot* love the moral excellencies of the divine character. But why? Not from any want of natural or intellectual capacity for the discernment of that excellence, — nor from any want of the natural or constitutional capacity of loving; but simply and exclusively, from the moral state of the heart. The inability consists solely in indisposition, and indeed is identical with it. It *is* indisposition, and nothing else, and nothing more. If, indeed, the essence of depravity consists in enmity against God, — what more do we affirm, in saying that a depraved creature cannot love the moral excellence of the divine nature, than that enmity is not, and never can be, love? It is only the affirmation, that two opposite states of affection towards the same object cannot subsist in the heart at the same time. The inability of which we speak is the inability of evil to love good, of pollution to love purity; — an inability which, instead of canceling obligation, is itself the state of habitually violated obligation, and the very sum of the creature's guiltiness. When we say of a man under the influence of the principle of integrity that he *cannot* do a dishonest thing, we do not mean that he has not the mental or the physical capacity to do it; we mean that such is the power of his ruling principle, that no consideration would tempt him to vio-

late its dictates. We thus express a *moral inability* of a favorable and commendable kind. We pay the highest tribute of admiration to the divine attribute of truth, when we say that "it is *impossible* for God to lie:" — and were we to say of Satan, the "Father of lies," that he *cannot* speak truth, unless for purposes of evil, we should express, in the strongest possible terms, the inveteracy and unmingled prevalence of the principles of malignity in that apostate spirit. Thus, when we speak of moral inability, in a good or in a bad sense, we mean no more than the dominion, respectively, of good or bad dispositions: — so that inability to love God is the very same thing with enmity against him, — or that dreadful perversity of moral feeling that is repelled, instead of attracted, by the light and love of the Godhead.* This, I have said, is the essence of human guilt, and it is the essence of guilt, wherever it may exist, throughout the universe. It is the sin of earth; it is the sin of hell. There, as well as here, the obligation to love God continues, — continues in all its force. There, as well as here, there remains the natural capacity of knowing and of loving; — and God himself, being immutably the same, continues as worthy to be loved as ever, — infinitely worthy. He has lost no part of his claim to the

* Agreeing as I do, to a large extent, with the views given by Mr. Hinton on this subject, in his recent publications, I must be permitted to shrink from the proposal of discarding the phraseology of *inability*, and even *moral inability*, altogether. Our Lord says — "No man *can* come unto me (*δυναται ελθειν*,) unless the Father who hath sent me draw him." Such an example sufficiently warrants the phraseology. I grant, however, with regret and pain, that it is often used most injudiciously, — in a manner that cannot fail to be productive of impressions the most false, and of consequences the most pernicious, both to the honor of God and the safety of men.

love of every intelligent mind, since man or angel fell. If the obligation to love him ceased, there would be no sin in hell, any more than on earth. The guilt of original apostasy might remain; but the further accumulation of guilt would be impossible.

Wildness and self-contradictoriness of some representations of disinterested love.

The idea, however, of disinterested love to God has been carried to a very wild extreme. When men have spoken of the duty and the possibility of retaining love to God, and rejoicing in his being glorified, although the glory should arise from their being themselves "thrust down to hell" and made the victims of endless perdition, — they have spoken, I apprehend, very unadvisedly, "understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm?" The language involves self-contradiction: the very supposition made in it being one which, were it within the bounds of possibility that it should be realized, would divest the blessed God of all that is amiable in his nature, and so render love to him impossible; for we cannot love, — no creature can, — that which is not in itself lovely, nor can there be guilt in the absence of such love. Let me not be misapprehended. I am aware, that of what *is* in itself lovely, morally lovely, the likings of a depraved nature can never be the legitimate standard. It is not because Jehovah has lost his loveliness, that such a creature does not discern and admire it; — it is because the creature has lost his rectitude of moral disposition, and his consequent perceptions of moral beauty. But by the supposition of which I am now speaking, Deity *would* be divested of his loveliness. Look at it in every point of ight. Is it the case of a holy creature, a creature that has not sinned, consigned to perdition in the exercise of pure sovereignty? The supposition is one pregnant with

all that is revolting. It robs Deity, at once and utterly, of whatever can possibly render him the object of love and confidence, and converts him into a very demon of malignity and unrighteousness. Is it, on the other hand, a sinful creature, but one to whom the offers of mercy through a Mediator have, in the divine name, been made, who has humbly and thankfully accepted them, believing in Christ, and confiding in the promises? Does not the supposition of such an one perishing involve, as flagrantly as before, the same consequence? — divesting Deity of all that can attract and retain the confiding affection of his creatures? It would be a violation of truth, — a breach of covenant, — a faithless dereliction of all the revealed grace and blood-sealed engagements of the gospel! So that here too the contradiction remains, of God s ceasing to be worthy of love, and the creature, notwithstanding, being still bound to love him. — And is the supposition with which we set out, of a creature damned who so loves God as to be satisfied with damnation for the sake of his glory, less revolting than either of these? — The truth is, that all such suppositions, are, in their very nature, blasphemous. They ought never to be so much as admitted into the mind; because, however much, in words, they may seem to glorify God, they do, in reality, most fearfully dishonor him.

It may perhaps be alleged, that the view thus given of the principle of disinterested love is an extreme one, — and that the extravagance of a few of its advocates cannot be admitted as affording a fair and sober representation of it. Yet, if the principle itself be a just one, it is not easy to see at what point the limit of disinterestedness is to be fixed. If the perfection of love to God does consist in loving him exclusively for what he is, indepen-

dently altogether of what he is to us, — it is difficult to fancy any point short of this extreme one, at which we can consistently stop. But we at once deny, or rather repeat the denial, that this *is* the perfection of love to God. We contend that it is essentially defective; — and that such perfection consists, neither in the love of complacency alone, nor in the love of gratitude alone, but in the union of both. We contend that in the bosom of a holy creature they are incapable of distinct subsistence, gratitude without complacency, or complacency without gratitude. Now it is obviously from the state of the principle in the bosom of such a creature, that our notion of its perfection must be formed; — and if there the two are in union, why is a purer and a loftier disinterestedness, according to the false notions of the system which requires it, to be demanded of man when regenerated from his sinful debasement, than existed in man during his original innocence and glory.

Question as to precedency in conversion of complacency or gratitude. — Priority of the former pleaded for by Edwards.

The same observation, perhaps, respecting their inseparable union as constituting the true perfection of love, may contribute to the determination of another question, — Which of the two, in conversion, is to be regarded as having the precedence. President Edwards insists upon it, that all genuine love to God commences in a complacential regard to him for what he is; that true gratitude must invariably be preceded by this, and have it for the foundation on which it rests. Now, that there can be no true gratitude for his goodness and grace to us, *apart from* complacency in God for what he is in himself, I have already freely admitted; but that the latter must always rise in the soul first, taking precedence of the other, either in nature or in time, I am far from being so willing to concede.

"In a holy thakfulness to God," says Edwards, "the concern our interest has in the divine goodness is not the first foundation of our being affected with it. That was laid in the heart before, in that stock of love which was to God for his excellency in himself, that makes the heart tender, and susceptible of such impressions from his goodness to us. Nor is our own interest, or the benefit we have received, the only or the chief objective ground of the present exercise of the affection, but God's goodness as part of the beauty of his nature; although the manifestations of that lovely attribute, set immediately before our eyes in the exercises of it for us, be the special occasion of the mind's attention to that beauty at that time, and serves to fix the attention, and heighten the affection."* The love is represented by him as "arising primarily from the exellency of divine things as they are in themselves, and not from any conceived relation they have to our own interest." And in the same strain he speaks respecting spiritual joy. "The first foundation of the delight a true saint has in God is his own perfection; and the first foundation of the delight he has in Christ is his own beauty: he appears in himself 'the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely.' The way of salvation by Christ is a delightful way to him, for the sweet and admirable manifestations of the divine perfections in it: the holy doctrines of the gospel, by which God is exalted and man abased, holiness honored and promoted, and sin greatly disgraced and discouraged, and free and sovereign love manifested, are glorious doctrines in his eyes, and sweet to his taste, *prior to* any con-

* Treatise on Rel. Affect. Part III. Second Sign of gracious Affections.

ception of his interest in these things. The saints rejoice in their interest in God, and that Christ is theirs; and they have great reason: but this is not the first spring of their joy. They first rejoice in God as glorious and excellent in himself, and then, secondarily, rejoice in it, that so glorious a God is theirs."*

I almost fear to detract anything from the high-toned loftiness of the principles of character thus laid down. Yet I cannot but suspect that in insisting on the invariable precedence of the abstract love of God for what he is, to any sentiment of gratitude to him for what he reveals himself as having done, there is more of the metaphysics of the schools than of the symplicity of the Bible; a kind of transcendentalism, that passes the limits of divine requirement. What, in point of fact, is the prevailing style of gospel invitation? When sinners are addressed in these invitations, is the ground assumed by the Apostles the abstract excellence and matchless loveliness of the divine character, independently of any relation in which he stands to themselves? Is it not rather "the riches of his grace," his "kindness towards them in Christ Jesus," his "delight in mercy," his readiness to save? I adduce a single specimen, which the memory of every reader of the New Testament will recognize as in harmony with the whole spirit and tenor of its contents. It is 2 Cor. v. 18 — 21. "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of re-

Bearing on this question of the style of gospel invitation.

* Treatise on Rel. Affect. Part III. Second Sign of gracious Affections.

conciliation. Now then we are embassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech by us, we pray (men) in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him who knew no sin to be sin for us; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

It is quite true, that wherever, by the illumination of the Spirit, a spiritual discernment is imparted of the mercy of God to sinners in Christ Jesus, there comes along with it a discovery to the soul of divine beauty, and especially of that infinite love, of which, in its union with light, so transcendent a manifestation is made by the gospel. But still, in the unqualified assertion, that all true love to God must *begin*, not with the emotion of gratitude, not with any feeling of self-interest, but with admiring complacency and delight in the abstract perfection of divine loveliness, there is something which is fitted to awaken startling doubts, and to engender needlessly, perplexing and discouraging fears, in the bosoms of many, to whom God would speak comfort and peace. I refer to those who, when first convinced of sin, and alarmed by the apprehension of its consequences, flee at once to God, as the *God of salvation*, and lay hold of his *covenanted mercy;* and in whose souls the first emotion of which they are conscious is that of *wondering gratitude*, — the emotion which natively arises from the style of gospel invitation as above exemplified.

Self-inconsistency of Edwards' statement.

I confess myself, indeed, at a loss to discern the consistency of Edwards' own statement. While he affirms, that the doctrine of the cross must appear glorious in the sinner's eyes, and be felt sweet to his taste, "*prior to any conception of his interest*" in that which they make known to him, — he at the same time admits, that "the manifestations of the

lovely attribute of the divine goodness set immediately before our eyes in its exercise *for us*, are the special occasion of the mind's attention to that beauty at the time." Now, if the special exercise of the attribute in what it has done *for us* be the means by which the attribute in its general amiableness is introduced and commended to our attention and affectionate regard,—how is it conceivable, how is it possible, that the attribute itself, in its abstract excellence, should become the object of our complacent delight and love *in the first instance*, and *prior to* any conception of our own interest in the discovery made of it? To me it seems evident, that, in the bosom of a consciously guilty creature, the view of the divine justice, and purity, and determined hostility to all sin, must necessarily engender despair, and nothing but despair. Now in despair there is no love, — no love either of complacency or of gratitude. It has been said, with as much truth of sentiment as sublimity of illustration, that "a sinner can no more admire and love the character of a holy God, when it opens upon his mind in a convincing manifestation, than he can survey with pleasure the beauties of a lovely landscape, when the light by which he sees it is the sudden fire of a bursting volcano."*

While, however, we plead for the legitimacy and the duty of gratitude, as one of the emotions to which the believing view of the cross gives birth, and one of the habitual principles which the faith of the cross maintains, it must ever be borne in mind, that we plead for that gratitude only which is associated with love to God for what he is, and for all that he is. It is, to say the very least of it, a most unfortunate expres-

Sentiments of Robert Sandeman.

* Dr. Chalmers.

sion of Mr. Sandeman, that "all a sinner's godliness consists in love to that which first relieved him." On this expression chiefly, the late Mr. Fuller rests the conclusion, that the whole of the practical system of Sandemanianism is founded in a principle of pure selfishness; a conclusion which he places in a variety of opprobrious lights, and exposes with all his logical acuteness and sarcastic severity. "He that views the cross of Christ," says he, "merely as an expedient to relieve the guilty, or only subscribes to the justice of God in his condemnation when conceiving himself delivered from it, has yet to learn the first principles of Christianity. His rejoicing in the justice of God, *as satisfied by the death of Christ*, while he hates it in itself considered, is no more than rejoicing in a dreaded tyrant being appeased, or somehow diverted from coming to hurt him. And shall we call this love of God? To make our deliverance from divine condemnation the condition of our subscribing to the justice of it, proves, beyond all contradiction, that we care only for ourselves, and that the love of God is not in us." This is most true: — if the supposed sentiment be held, there is no evading the conclusion. But who, I would ask, ever avowed, ever held, ever could hold, such a sentiment? Mr. Fuller's strictures upon them.

In the system of Sandeman there are positions from which I decidedly dissent; and the spirit in which he has propounded his system I hold in unqualified detestation. But the views exhibited in his writings of the ground of a sinner's hope, and of the simplicity of the medium of interest in that ground, are in general admirably clear; — and I cannot but think that, in affixing to his ideas of godliness the stigma of unmingled selfishness, more has been made of his strong and, it may be admit-

ted, unguarded language, than, in candid interpretation, it will bear. I question if, by the obnoxious expression of which Mr. Fuller makes so ample a use, Mr. Sandeman meant more than a sinner's love to God must regard him in the relation in which the gospel reveals him, — that is, as the God of grace and salvation, — as "in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Let it be observed, that, to interpret the expression as "making our deliverance from condemnation the condition of our subscribing to the justice of it" is to make his sentiment not merely *selfish*, but *self-contradictory*, and its author not only heretical, but devoid of understanding. For, according to this interpretation, there is obviously, on the sinner's part, no subscribing to the justice of his sentence *at all;* inasmuch as not to acknowledge a sentence *just*, except upon the condition of its not being executed, is in truth to pronounce it *unjust*. I will venture to say, that no professor of the faith of the gospel ever held such a sentiment, and that no man on earth (judging from his writings) was ever farther from holding it than Robert Sandeman; whose entire system proceeds on the assumption of the unimpeachable righteousness of legal condemnation, and the consequent unconditional freeness of gospel grace.

The question one of *fact* rather than of theoretical doctrine.

The question now before us is, indeed, a question rather of *fact* than of *theory*. The question is, *Does* any depraved and guilty creature — *Can* any depraved and guilty creature, ever love and rejoice in the justice of God, till he has some perception of the union of that justice with mercy in the discoveries of the gospel? Till then, he hates it, and he cannot but hate it. A heart that is enmity against God,

and regardless of his glory, cannot but hate what condemns itself and subjects it to destruction. But, although the sinner, in his unconverted state, is thus selfish, solicitous only to escape suffering, whatever become of the divine honor, — it does not at all follow, that because it is the discovery to his mind of the union of holiness, with mercy, of justice with grace, that first attracts and fixes his love, therefore that love, at the time, and ever after, must be a selfish principle. With equal reason might it be pleaded, that the love which an *unfallen* and *sinless* creature bears to God must be a selfish love, because, in loving the divine justice, he loves it as a part of the divine character, — that is, he loves it in its inseparable union with infinite benevolence. And yet, to love it otherwise, to love it abstractedly from such benevolence, would not, most assuredly, be to love it *as it subsists in God:* — for there, from eternity to eternity, the two are inseparably blended; — the justice is benevolent justice, the benevolence righteous benevolence; and every one attribute of the character must be loved in its association with all the rest.

Summary of the true state of the case.

How, then, stands the case? What is the view of his character in which God actually becomes the object of love to the converted sinner? To this question I would answer in one word, — it is the view of it in which it is revealed in the cross. There the spiritually enlightened sinner sees "Mercy and Truth meeting together, Righteousness and Peace embracing each other," — holiness in union with love, justice with grace; — and, under the agency of the regenerating Spirit, he loves God in the unbroken harmony of all his attributes, as displayed in the Redeemer's work, — the harmony of "light" and "love." The light without

the love, — the purity of the divine nature flashing upon the mind apart from its benevolence, could only drive to despair: — the love without the light, the mere benevolence of God disunited from his essential purity, could engender no feeling but that of a selfish satisfaction in sin. But, light and love together constituting the true character of God as it is manifested in the cross, it is in this view of it that it becomes the object of love to the believing sinner. The very consideration, that the love which springs up in his bosom is love to God *as He is seen in Jesus Christ*, is of itself sufficient to show that it must be love to holiness as well as to goodness; — for the love displayed in Christ is *holy love*, love so blended and incorporated with purity, that in the mind which takes a right view of the Savior's work, the one cannot be disunited from the other. On the cross, the two inscriptions stand alike conspicuous — "God is light," and "God is love." Both are *seen* together; both are *believed* together; and the love which springs from this faith regards the divine Being under both aspects, — comprehending at once gratitude to the God of mercy, and delight in the God of holiness. It is thus the same principle with that which rules in the bosoms of creatures that have never fallen.

There is in the nature of the divine Being what is fitted to inspire the very holiest and happiest of creatures with awe, even while they love, delight, and adore. The entire character, in all its parts, is at once the object of "reverence and godly fear," and of the purest, the most fervent, and the most confiding affection; and by the contemplation of it in the cross, both feelings are called forth into exercise, even in angelic bosoms. Were it in our power to separate these views of God; — could we give a

guilty creature, in the full consciousness of his guilt, to see one side only of the manifestation, — to see the cross as the exhibition solely of the untainted purity, the undissembling truth, the unbending justice, and the avenging jealousy, of the Being with whom he has to do, the cross itself would become the mightiest instrument of torture to the awakened soul, — subjecting it to the agonies of a spiritual crucifixion, — inflicting on it the horrors of despair. But the cross, while it shows the holiness of God in all its purity, the justice of God in all its strictness, and the jealousy of God in all its consuming terrors, holds forth also to view the love of God in all its infinitude, the compassions of God in all their tenderness, the mercy of God in all its fullness and freeness: — so that, from the believing view of it there spring up, at the same moment, the emotions of affectionate fear and reverential love, — of complacent delight and thankful joy, — under the combined influence of which the happy spirit relies upon him, serves him, imitates him, enjoys him: — and in ninety-nine cases out of the hundred, — probably in nine hundred and ninety-nine out of the thousand, were the metaphysical question proposed to the simple-hearted subject of divine grace, while charmed and melted and gladdened by the new lights that have come in upon his mind, whether the love of gratitude or the love of complacency had first touched his soul, — he would be at a loss for a reply; — he would be in danger of fretting at the unwelcome interruption thrown into the delightful current of his feelings; and especially if you joined with the inquiry, the puzzle about the order of nature and the order of time: he could only tell you, that he he had seen the love of God in Christ, and that it had won and captivated his heart; — that in Christ he saw

God as at once the God of grace and the God of holiness; and that he loved him for both, — for the grace of his holiness, and for the holiness of his grace, — for what he was in himself, and for what he had done for sinners!

Considering, as I do, the LOVE OF GOD as the grand essential principle of all morality, I have devoted to it the greater measure of attention. In next Lecture, which will close the series, we shall see how this great principle is brought into operation by the gospel, — and what are the peculiarities to which the discoveries of the gospel give rise, in the exercise both of this primary principle and of the "second which is like unto it," the love of our neighbor. We shall have occasion, in illustrating these topics, to offer a few strictures on the theory of virtue proposed and advocated by President Edwards.

LECTURE IX.

ON THE PECULIARITIES OF CHRISTIAN OBLIGAITN AND DUTY.

ROM. XII. 1.

"I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God."

IN last Lecture, I had occasion to notice the sentiments of the unrivaled theological metaphysician, Jonathan Edwards, on the necessity of disinterestedness in our love to God. I shall introduce the subject of the present Lecture by a few strictures on his more general theory of virtue; a theory, which the celebrity of its author entitled to an earlier notice, but which would not have found a place formerly, without, in some degree, anticipating other topics.

Strictures on Edwards' theory of virtue. — Statement of the theory.

According to Edwards, then, true virtue consists in "*benevolence to being in general.*" Such is his own expression: — "True virtue most essentially consists in benevolence to being in general: — or, perhaps, to speak more accurately, it is that consent, propensity, and union of heart, to being in general, that is immediately exercised in a general good will." More at large: — "When I say, true virtue consists in love to being in general, I shall not be likely to be understood, that no one act of the mind, or exercise of love, is

of the nature of true virtue, but what has being in general, or the great system of universal existence, for its direct and immediate object; so that no exercise of love, or kind affection towards any one particular being, that is but a small part of this whole, has anything of the nature of true virtue. But that the nature of true virtue consists in a disposition to benevolence towards being in general; though, from such a disposition may arise exercises of love to particular beings, as objects are presented and occasions arise. No wonder, that he who is of a generally benevolent disposition should be more disposed than another to have his heart moved with benevolent affection to particular persons, whom he is acquainted and conversant with, and from whom arise the greatest and most frequent occasions for exciting his benevolent temper. But my meaning is, that no affections towards particular persons or beings are of the nature of true virtue, but such as arise from a generally benevolent temper, or from that habit or frame of mind wherein consists a disposition to love being in general."

Again, he says: — "That temper, or disposition of heart, that consent, union, or propensity of mind to being in general — is virtue truly so called; or, in other words, true grace or real holiness. And no other disposition or affection but this is of the nature of true virtue."*

This benevolence to being, as might be supposed, is altogether irrespective of *character*. Embracing all intelligent and sentient existence, it is simple good will, with nothing in it of the nature of *complacence*: — "What I would have observed at present is, that it must be allowed benevolence doth not necessarily pre-suppose beauty in its

* Diss. on the Nature of true Virtue. Chap. i.

object. What is commonly called love of complacence presupposes beauty. For it is no other than delight in beauty, or complacence in the person or being beloved for his beauty. If virtue be the beauty of an intelligent being, and virtue consists in love, then it is a plain inconsistence to suppose that virtue primarily consists in any love to its object for its beauty, either in a love of complacence, which is a delight in a being for his beauty, or in a love of benevolence that has the beauty of its object for its foundation. For that would be to suppose that the beauty of intelligent beings primarily consists in love to beauty, or that their virtue first of all consists in their love to virtue; — which is an inconsistence, and going in a circle."*

This general affection, of benevolence to being universally, is parceled out amongst individual beings, according to the proportions of their respective *degrees of existence:* — "Pure benevolence, in its first exercise, is nothing else but being's uniting consent, or propensity to being; appearing true and pure by its extending to being in general, and including to the highest general good, and to each being, whose welfare is consistent with the highest general good, in proportion to the degrees of *existence*, — understand other things being equal."† The "degree of existence" is thus explained: — "I say, in proportion of the degree of existence; because one being may have more existence than another, as he may be greater than another. That which is *great* has more existence, and is further from nothing, than that which is little. — An *archangel* must be supposed to have more

* Diss. on the Nature of true Virtue. Chap. i.

† Ibid.

existence, and to be everywhere further removed from *nonentity*, then a *worm*."*

"General entity" being thus the primary object of virtuous affection or propensity, the second, according to the theory, is "*benevolent being;*" in other words, "a secondary ground of pure benevolence is virtuous benevolence itself in its object" "When any one under the influence of general benevolence sees another being possessed of the like general benevolence, this attaches his heart to him, and draws forth greater love to him, than merely his having existence. —— He looks on a benevolent propensity to being in general, wherever he sees it, as the beauty of the being in whom it is; an excellency, that renders him worthy of esteem, complacence, and the greater good will."† — It is here, then, under this secondary ground of benevolence, that any place is found for *complacence* or *moral esteem*. I reserve remarks; I only now state the theory.

True virtue consisting in love to being in general, it follows, on the principles of the theory, and forms accordingly one of its essential articles, that it must consist *chiefly* in *love to God*. — This is founded both in the primary and the secondary ground of benevolence. According to the former, benevolence to being in general regarding individual beings in proportion to their respective degrees of existence, — "it follows, as a necessary consequence, that that Being who has the most of being, or the greatest share of universal existence, has proportionably the greatest share of virtuous benevolence:" — which necessarily places the divine Being, as "infinitely the greatest,"

* Ibid. Note to the preceding citation.
† Diss. on the Nature of true Virtue. Chap. i.

and having "infinitely the greatest share of existence," infinitely above every other being and all other being combined, as the object of this benevolence. According to the latter, — the love of *benevolent being* regarding its objects in proportion to the measure of this benevolence, that is, of spiritual beauty or moral excellency, apparent in their respective characters; — God, being not only the greatest of beings, but "infinitely the most beautiful and excellent," so that "all the beauty throughout the whole creation is but the reflection of the diffused beams of that Being who hath an infinite fullness of brightness and glory," — "he that has true virtue, consisting in benevolence to being in general, and in that complacence in virtue, or moral beauty, and benevolence to virtuous being, must necessarily have — a supreme love to God, both of benevolence and complacence. And all true virtue must, radically and essentially, and as it were summarily, consist in this."*

Objections to the theory.

It would be foreign to the object of these Lectures, and especially to the particular subject now before us, to enter into the minuter details of this theory. It is with leading and essential principles we have at present to do. I shall say nothing of the characteristic tendency of the author's mind to metaphysical abstraction, as indicated in his selection of phraseology; the word *being* or *entity* "serving," as has, I think with justice, been observed, "to give the theory a mysterious outside, but bringing with it from the schools nothing except their obscurity."† Neither shall I dwell on what the same authority designates his "really unmeaning as-

* Diss. on the Nature of true Virtue. Chap. ii.

† Sir James Mackintosh's Prelim. Dissert p. 341.

sertion, or assumption, that there are *degrees* of existence:"* an assertion, which certainly wears the aspect rather of a metaphysical pleasantry, or *jeu d'esprit*, than of the seriously propounded basis of an ethical system. "When we try such a phrase," says Sir James Mackintosh, "by applying it to matters within the sphere of our own experience, we see that it means nothing but degrees of certain faculties and powers."† What more *can* it mean? Qualities, whether physical or intellectual, we know to be susceptible of degrees. Their nature admits of them; every day's observation discovers them. But in simple *existence*, the talk about them is mere illusion. Everything that is *is*, as much as everything else that is:—in the mere fact of *being* there cannot surely be any distinction of more or less. Edwards's own explanation shows this:—"That which is *great* has more existence, and is farther from nothing, than that which is *little*. One being may have everything positive belonging to it, and everything which goes to its positive existence (in opposition to defect) in a higher degree than another; or a greater capacity and power, greater understanding, every faculty and every positive quality, in a higher degree."‡ When the statement is thus divested of its abstract peculiarity of form, and *being* or *existence* is explained as comprehending *capacity*, *power*, *understanding*, every *faculty*, and every *positive quality*; we cease, indeed, to be at any loss to find room for degrees, but we are fain to smile at the common-place simplicity into which what wore so much of the garb of metaphys-

* Sir James Mackintosh's Prelim. Dissert. p. 341.

† Ibid.

‡ Dissert. on the Nature of true Virtue. Chap. i. Note.

ical abstraction has resolved itself, — how shallow what seemed so deep! Passing, however, from these things, I may be allowed, with all diffidence, to observe: —

In the first place, — according to the principles of this theory, we must regard *benevolence to being in general*, as forming the sum total of the character of Deity, or of what Edwards (in terms more befitting philosophic speculation than Christian devotion) denominates "God's virtue:" the benevolence including, of course, among its objects, HIMSELF, as infinitely the greatest, because possessing infinitely the largest amount of being. But it certainly requires an ingenuity and metaphysical refining, far beyond the plain simplicity of the Bible, to bring all the attributes of the divine character under the category of *benevolence*. *Righteousness* and *truth*, for example, — how can they be reduced under it, but by the operation of some such scholastic process? They are distinct from it in the common sense of mankind; they are distinct from it in all the representations of Scripture.

Secondly: — With regard to the virtue of the creature; we have seen on what grounds that benevolence in which it is summed up is regarded as consisting chiefly in love to God, — namely, that he is infinitely the greatest and infinitely the best of beings, possessing infinitely the largest amount of existence, and infinitely the largest measure of moral excellence. The former of these is the *primary* ground of virtuous disposition; and the disposition, on that ground, having regard simply to being, not to character, has in it nothing of the nature of *complacence*. The love, therefore, of the creature to the Creator, in its *proper* and *primary* exercise, has in it no complacence in the divine excellence, or moral beauty. And when, on the *secondary* ground of virtuous disposi-

tion, complacence does find a place, into what, after all, does it resolve itself? It is nothing more than complacence in that very benevolence to being which is the sum of divine as well as of human virtue. But what is complacence in this benevolence beyond the benevolence itself? Nothing: it is only another exercise of the same principle. "Loving a being on this ground," says Edwards himself, — (meaning the ground of "a benevolent propensity to being in general, as the beauty of the being in whom it is,") — "loving a being on this ground necessarily arises from pure benevolence to being in general, and *comes to the same thing;*" so that, our very complacence in God is no more than a modified operation of that benevolence to being, in which, whether Deity or the creature be its object, there is *no* complacence. The benevolence having regard, not to character, but simply to being, so also ultimately, though not immediately, must the complacence.

Thirdly: — The theory sets aside, from among the virtues, all the more limited and peculiar social affections of our nature, whether those of kindred, of friendship, or of country. This is manifest. If it be so, that "no other affection is of the nature of true virtue," besides the "propensity of mind to being in general," it is a necessary sequence, that in as far as the more private affections rest on grounds which are at all more special and limited, they have nothing in them of the nature of true virtue. But the source of these affections is *not* benevolence to being in general, nor the perception of such benevolence existing in their objects: they are founded in the *peculiar relations* of those objects *to ourselves.* In thus excluding the private affections from the catalogue of the virtues, the theory symbolizes with the Godwinean system, by

which all these affections were, in like manner, merged in the one equalizing sentiment of general philanthropy; a system which, while it outraged all the feelings of our nature, and was contradicted in every man's bosom by the emotions of every hour, contained at the same time a libel on the wisdom of the "Only Wise," by whose kind appointment it is that those affections are the strongest whose salutary operation is most defined and concentrated, and most immediately and urgently required; which do not roam at large over so vast a field as the unseen millions of our species, or, still more inefficiently, lose themselves in the infinite abstraction of universal being. Like every other system that has speculated against the laws of nature, it could not maintain its ground.

Fourthly: — The theory does not embrace in it, as among the ingredients of love to God, the principle of *gratitude*. Gratitude, we have formerly seen, is love to God for what he is *to us*. But this cannot be included in benevolence to being in general; and the exclusion of it is one of the great defects of the system, — a system which owes its origin, perhaps, to no uncommon source of defective theory, the philosophic predilection for simplifying, and reducing all virtue to some one disposition. There may, indeed, have been another cause of the error; namely, that, since the primary principles of moral excellence must be found in God, gratitude cannot be of the number, — there being no possibility of its existence in the infinite Mind; inasmuch as it would be blasphemy to imagine any obligation to lie on Him who gives to all, and receives from none, — the Fountain into which nothing flows, but from which proceed all the streams of blessing in the universe. "Who hath first given him?

and it shall be recompensed unto him again." But to conclude from this, that the love of gratitude towards God cannot belong to the essence of virtue in the creature, appears to indicate a strange inconsideration of a very simple principle, — the principle, namely, that the great essential elements of rectitude are necessarily modified by diversity of relative condition. There is a difference between the duties of a parent and the duties of a child, and between the parental and filial affections by which the respective duties are dictated: — but both the one and the other are modifications of the same general elementary principles of moral goodness. The same is the case, in the intercourse of mankind, with regard to the benefactor and the recipient of the benefit. Benevolence is the virtue of the one; gratitude the virtue of the other. It would be as unreasonable to say that there is no virtue in gratitude because it is not benevolence, as it would be to say, that there is no virtue in benevolence because it is not gratitude. Each is the peculiar modification of the general principles of rectitude, appropriate to the relative position of the party to whom it appertains. The principle of this simple distinction is evidently applicable, with equal force, to the relation between the *Creator* and the *creature*; — so that that may be essentially virtuous in the creature which cannot have any subsistence in the Creator; because it may be precisely that modification of the great principles of rectitude which pertains to the relation of dependent existence. Benevolence may thus be moral goodness in the Creator, while gratitude, or a suitable return for that benevolence, is moral goodness in the creature. It is on this ground,— (the ground that the general principles of rectitude are modified by difference of relative condition, and conse-

quently that the virtues of different relations are modifications of these general principles,)—it is on this ground, that we can affirm obedience to the law of God to be perfect, although the individual subject of it has not been placed in all the relations and conditions to which its preceptive requirements extend. Were the ground we have stated incorrect, this could in no instance be affirmed. We could not say that Adam's obedience was perfect during the period of his innocence; nor could we with truth pronounce "the man Christ Jesus" himself to have fulfilled the law, because there were many conditions and relations embraced in its commands, in which he was not and could not be placed. But we call that obedience to the law perfect, in which there is a perfect spiritual conformity to its elementary principles in the dispositions and conduct of the agent, in all the departments in which he is called to think, or feel, or [illegible]

While on these and other grounds we conceive this moral theory to be essentially faulty, it is with high and unqualified approbation that we quote the following sentiments, which are in full harmony with the positions we have formerly taken up; — only premising, that the love to God, for which the place is so peremptorily claimed of the foundation of all practical morals, must be understood as comprehending, along with benevolence, or delight in the divine happiness, complacence in the divine excellence, and gratitude for the divine goodness: — "Hence it appears, that those schemes of philosophy, which, however well in some respects they may treat of benevolence to mankind, and other virtues depending on it, yet have not a supreme regard to God and love to him laid in the

* Notes and Illustrations. Note S.

foundation, and all other virtues handled in a connection with this, and in a subordination to this, are not true schemes of philosophy, but are fundamentally and essentially defective. And, whatever other benevolence, or generosity towards mankind, and other virtues, or moral qualifications, that go by that name, any are possessed of, that are not attended with a love to God, which is altogether above them, and to which they are subordinate, and on which they are dependent, there is nothing of the nature of true virtue or religion in them. And it may be asserted in general, that nothing is of the nature of true virtue, in which God is not the first and the last: or which, with regard to their exercise in general, have not their first foundation and source in apprehensions of God's supreme dignity and glory, and in answerable esteem and love of Him, and have no respect to God as the supreme end."

Influence of the gospel in producing *love to God.* Nature and operation of faith.

In illustrating the practical influence of the gospel, and the peculiarities of Christian obligation arising from its discoveries, I shall begin with the bearing of those discoveries on the generation and maintenence of this great principle of love to God. But first allow me a remark or two on the antipathy and contempt with which philosophers have ever talked of *faith*, as the divinely recogn ized spring of moral duty. Never was antipathy, never was contempt, more unphilosophical. I am aware, indeed, of the occasion that has been given for both, by the mysticism in which the very term has too often been involved, — and of which, as might have been anticipated, infidels have not been slow to avail themselves, — laughing at faith as something transcendental and inexplicable, pos-

sessed by the initiated in mysterious appropriation, but which it would be a kind of profanation to simplify. Yet nothing is more simple than either its own nature or the nature of its influence. Faith is no mysterious, abstract, undefinable principle. The scriptural definition of it is "*the belief of the truth.*"* It invariably regards an object; so that there can no more be faith without something believed, than there can be love without something loved: — and the entire influence of faith, as a practical principle, arises from the nature and felt importance of the truth believed. This also is the simple scriptural account of the matter: — "When ye received the word of God which ye heard from us, ye received it, not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, *which effectually worketh also in you that believe.*"†

It is in the truth believed that the motives to holy practice are contained; and these motives are brought to bear upon the mind and upon the immediate principles of action, when the evidence of the truth is discerned, and it is "received in the love of it." Hence the Apostle Paul says — "Faith worketh by love."‡ What can be more simple? Faith is the belief of the truth. The truth believed is a testimony from God, which sets his own character in the most amiable of all possible lights. The belief of this testimony produces love to the divine subject of it; and this love operates in active obedience. Where is the mystery of all this? Where is the ground for the ridicule and satire of the *soi-disant* philosopher? The principle on which the power of faith proceeds is altogether rational: — it is the principle, that a truth understood and believed will produce effects corresponding to

* 2 Thess. ii. 13. † 1 Thess. ii. 13. ‡ Gal. v. 6.

its nature and to the circumstances of the persons believing it. It is from the nature and native tendency of the truth believed, that faith becomes the principle of character: — so that the believer's being "sanctified *by the truth*," and his heart being "purified *by faith*," are expressions of equivalent import.*

In this great article of Christian Ethics, therefore,— namely, the necessity and the power of faith, — there is nothing in the least degree beyond the range of the most perfect simplicity. It is in accordance with all the admitted phenomena in the constitution of the human mind. Every one is aware of the influence of the sentiments of the mind upon the affections and desires of the heart, and through them, upon the general character. Every one is aware, also, of the proportion which this influence bears to the firmness with which the truth of the sentiments is believed, and to the measure of value and importance attached to them, — to the degree in which they are seen to be true, and felt to be precious; the *nature* of the influence corresponding with the nature of the sentiment; the *degree* of the influence with the strength of the hold which the sentiment has upon the mind. To "live by faith," therefore, is not to live by a mystical abstraction, that defies reason, and is independent of evidence; it is to live under the habitual control of those motives to trust and to obedience which the gospel doctrine, seen and felt to be truth, and truth divine, brings to bear in all their power of persuasive tenderness upon the mind.

In further illustrating what these motives are, — what are the special considerations by which, in those circum-

* Compare John xvii. 17. and Acts xv. 8, 9.

stances of new and peculiar obligation in which the mediation of Jesus Christ has placed our fallen world, the principles and precepts of the divine law are enforced on human observance, — I must be allowed to proceed on the same assumption as heretofore; — namely, that the design of the mission of the Son of God was, by an atonement for human guilt, — an atonement made by the sacrificial substitution of himself in the room of the condemned, — so to "declare God's righteousness," as that, in consistency with the claims and the glory of this attribute of the divine character and government, the mercy in which Jehovah delights, might have scope for its unrestrained exercise in the extension of pardon and the bestowment of life: — and at the same time, that, in this doctrine of free mercy to the guilty through an atoning and interceding Mediator, an instrumental means might be provided, fitted for winning back to God the wayward spirits of the rebellious, and bringing them to new, and holy, and happy subjection. These are the two great ends which the gospel is designed to answer. Both are comprehended in its being "the power of God unto salvation." And in effecting both by one and the same means, Jehovah appears acting in the moral as he does in the physical world, where, with a similar economy of instrumental agency, he often gives production from one cause to no small variety of results.

Assumed ends of the gospel.

Ever since the apostasy of man, God has been dealing with our world as a fallen world, in the exercise of sovereign mercy, through a Mediator; and I can neither recede from, nor qualify my former statement, that, in such a world, the very first thing required of its guilty inhabitants, is submission to the divine scheme of mercy.

Submission to the mercy of God in the gospel the first thing required of sinners, and necessity of all acceptable obedience.

The *character* of the race being that of sinfulness, and its *state* that of guilt and condemnation, the peculiar constitution under which it has been placed is a mediatorial administration of grace; and in these circumstances, the consequence is unavoidable, that there can be no acceptable obedience rendered to God, without the primary requisite of an unconditional surrender of the mind and heart to the principles and provisions of this divine constitution. In this lies the grand distinction between the moral system of the Bible, and the various theories of the wise men of the world, by whom this constitution is not recognized. On this point we dare not yield our ground; we dare not attempt a compromise. We could not do so, without renouncing all that is peculiar in revelation. The gospel is "the power of God unto salvation," as being the divinely adapted method by which the guilty may be pardoned and reinstated in favor, without any compromise of the glory of his righteousness: — but it is more; it is "the power of God unto salvation," as being also the divinely devised means for the purification of the sinful, — for restoring the rational and immortal nature of man from its moral and spiritual ruin, — for re-enstamping upon it the lovely features of the divine likeness, and bringing it anew under the sway of those principles that ruled and blessed it while it "kept its first estate."

If there be one end which God purposes to effect by the mediation of his Son more sublimely excellent than another, it is this, — the recovery of man's nature to its pristine purity and love, and so to its original honor and joy. Pardon is precious; but, in a very important sense, pardon is but a means to an end. It is itself, indeed, a part, and a most essential and precious part, of salvation;

but is subservient to something still higher, even to sanctification. God forgives sin; but the end of the atonement has not been fully answered when sin has been forgiven. God forgives sin, that, by the grace displayed in its free and full remission, the heart may be subdued and won to himself; that it may be purified by the faith of the testimony which reveals his mercy — "the word of reconciliation;" that its enmity may be conquered, and generous, grateful, holy love implanted in its room.

The gospel strikes at the root of all evil — the enmity of the heart against God.

It is evident, that if there be any one principle that constitutes, in the sight of God, the elementary essence of moral evil, or spiritual degeneracy, to that principle must the remedial means, whatever they are, be adapted and applied. The object of the gospel is not to reform merely, but to regenerate. It is not to produce a partial, or even extensive alteration, in the doings and appearances of the *outer* man; it is to effect a radical change in the ruling principles of the *inner* man. It is to give life to the dead; it is to create anew. The germinant principle of all moral evil, we hesitate not to say, is alienation of heart from God. Men may speculate without end on the principles of morals; but so long as they lose sight of this, as the real character of fallen humanity, they are sadly astray from truth. This enmity being the bitter fountain of all the streams of evil, the grand object must be the rectification of this fountain — the "healing" of this spring. Till this is done, nothing is done; when this is done, all is done. This change on the inward principle and state of the heart, in proportion as it is effected, will, of necessity, rectify the entire constitution and character of the man, as a moral agent. Now this is precisely what the gospel professes to accomplish, and what, in hundreds of

thousands of instances, it has proved itself capable of effecting. It aims at nothing less; it can achieve nothing more. That which "slays this enmity," and reconciles the heart to God in the exercise of a new and holy affection, does exactly what man requires, and what is, at the same time, indispensable to any radical and permanent change of character. In vain we lop boughs, while the "root of bitterness" remains. In vain we attempt to purify streams, while from the fountain-head are still issuing the waters of pollution.

Kind of doctrine necessary for subduing enmity.

If love to God is the principle to be wrought in the heart, it is clear that the doctrine which is the appointed means of working it must contain such a manifestation of God as is fitted to subdue enmity, and to reconcile the alienated affections. It does not follow, however, that in all cases in which this doctrine is made known, the happy consequence must ensue. The doctrine may be fitted, — eminently, nay even perfectly fitted, for its end; and yet, instead of the end being effected, the very opposite of it may be the unhappy result. The *proper* tendency of "the goodness of God" is to lead the partakers of it "to repentance;" but alas! how often, "after their hardness and impenitent heart," do men "despise the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering," and "treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath!" As moral means, from their very nature, can never be compulsory, they may be admirably adapted for effectuating certain moral changes, while yet, in many instances, the only effect resulting from their application is to manifest, by trial, the force of the principles of resistance, the obstinacy of high-minded pride, the determined self-will of corrupt propensities. It is not by the law only, but by the gos-

pel too, that "sin takes occasion" to work in the perverse spirit of man "all manner of lawless desire."

Ground of apostolic appeals in enforcing obedience, illustrated and vindicated.

It is on the amiable character of the divine Being, as it is manifested in the gospel, that the apostolic appeals are founded, in those parts of their writings in which they apply divine truths to their practical ends, and stir up the believers to alacrity and perseverance in duty. The text of this discourse affords an exemplification of their general style on such occasions: — "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies" (that is, your persons) "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Under a beautiful allusion to the sacrificial rites of the Jewish ceremonial, which we cannot at present trace out in detail, either in its points of parallelism or of contrast, the general duty is here enjoined, of the unreserved consecration of our whole persons, — of all our corporeal and mental powers, — to the living, and active, and self-denying service of the God of our salvation. And what is the motive by which the duty is urged? "I beseech you BY THE MERCIES OF GOD." The mercies of God are the compassions of his nature, as displayed towards sinners in the mission and work of his Son, and in the bestowment, through him, of all the precious blessings of redemption. To those who "know the grace of God in truth," the appeal cannot be addressed, without awakening in their bosoms the emotions of conscious shame and of thrilling gratitude; of shame, that these "mercies," thus wonderfully displayed, should have been so unduly appreciated, so lightly felt, so inadequately returned; — of gratitude, for the discovery and experience of their exercise towards creatures so unworthy, so much worse than unworthy, so

deserving of his "indignation and wrath." The appeal is the most persuasive that can be addressed to the renewed mind. It is not made to the mere selfish apprehension of coming vengeance, — a sentiment which may generate a profusion of external observance, but can inspire no attachment of heart, no willing and holy subjection; it is made to the generous and noble principle of grateful filial affection, — the affection of a heart that has experienced kindness, and that feels and returns it, — an affection that is, at the same time, associated and blended with a devout delight in the entire character of that great and gracious Being, whom "the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, hath declared."

To a right-hearted child, it is not the apprehension of the rod, the mere dread of punishment, that most powerfully restrains from disobedience; it is the thought of his father's love, — of violating the obligation, so tenderly felt, which that love imposes, — of engendering a sentiment of displeasure in a heart so kind, and of which the affection is so highly prized, — of waking an emotion of sorrow, of inflicting one pang of anguish, in a bosom so tender and so fond. Thus it is with the renewed sinner — the child of God. "The mercies of God," now his heavenly Father, are his wonder and his joy. His love is his chief delight. He could not live without it. It is not the thought of God's punitive vengeance so much that restrains him from evil; it is the "remembrance of his mercy," — the recollection of his love, — his free, disinterested, generous, holy, infinite, and everlasting love, — the love manifested in the "unspeakable gift" of his Son. When he is tempted to the indulgence of any prohibited desire, the thought of that love lays under arrest the rebel lust, and nails it to the cross. When his lips are opened

for the utterance, or his hand stretched forth for the perpetration, of evil, the recollection of "the mercies of God" startles and wakes to jealousy his spiritual sensibilities, draws to his eye the tear of grief and shame, shuts the lips, and stays the hand. Oh! how little do they understand of the gospel, — of the revelation of the redeeming love of God, — of the tidings of mercy to sinners through a divine Mediator, — who impute to it a tendency to dissolve, or even to relax, the bonds of moral obligation. They speak in ignorance. They "understand neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm." They discover equally little acquaintance with the nature of the gospel, and with the constitution of the human mind. As soon will filial love, engendered by parental tenderness, and associated with esteem of parental excellence, show itself in indifference and contumely, in the studied frustration of parental wishes, and the contumacious spurning of the parental yoke. As soon will gratitude to a benefactor instigate him who feels and cherishes it to defamation, and outrage, and murder.

That the grace of the gospel may be misunderstood, and perverted to the worst of purposes, to the establishment of principles the most licentious, and the vindication of courses the most abandoned, I am far from denying. What is there that is beyond the reach of perversion by "hearts deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked?" The semblance and profession of filial love itself may be assumed in hypocritical villany, for the nefarious purposes of a cold-blooded selfishness. But who ever thinks of alleging, because such a case is possible, or has actually been exemplified, that this is the natural and appropriate tendency of parental kindness, or that such is the legitimate operation of the filial affection by which it

is returned? The exception is not the rule. The very wonder and horror which the occurrence of such an exception inspires, most impressively evince, what, according to the universal sentiments and feelings of mankind, are the natural tendencies of parental kindness, and what the expected indications of filial love.

What should be our emotions, were we, at any time, to discover, that the man whom we had been regarding as our bitter enemy, keeping aloof from him and treating him as such, opposing his will, thwarting his purposes, traducing his reputation, injuring his interests, wronging and wounding him with an inventive ingenuity of mischief, — that this man has all the while been acting the part of our best friend. — that, while we were misconceiving his principles and misconstruing his conduct, he has been unwearied in the exercise of his kindness, devising plans for our happiness, consulting and studying our interests at the expense of his own, relinquishing good and encountering evil for our sake? What a pang of intolerable anguish would the discovery send through our hearts! — what shame! — what self-loathing! — what eagerness of solicitude to compensate for the past, and to attest the sincerity of our penitence by the unremitting devotedness of self-denied activity in the service of him whom we have wronged! Similar in nature, though heavier in pressure and keener in agony, are the feelings of a sinner, when first, by the illumination of the Divine Spirit, he discerns the true character of the Being against whom he has all along been trespassing, — whom he has regarded with the feelings only of jealousy and suspicion, of distrust, and fear, and aversion, — as all sternness and repulsiveness, — an implacable foe, with the frown of wrath upon his brow, the threat of damnation on his

lips, and the thunderbolt of vengeance in his hand;—when, through the medium of the cross, he sees into the heart of God, and discovers what an infinitude of love is there;—when, instead of an incensed and ruthless enemy, he beholds the best and kindest of friends, whose very nature is love, whose very delight is in mercy, who is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." This is the discovery that melts the heart to contrite sorrow. Holiness awes; justice alarms; love subdues. Oh, the pangs that wring the awakened sinner's soul, when he finds that he has all his life long been sinning against infinite love; that his hard and jealous thoughts of the Most High have been as false as they have been wicked,—the very opposite of truth, the foul calumnies of the father of lies! He "abhors himself, and repents in dust and ashes." The heart of stone becomes a heart of flesh;—and, "the mercies of God," disclosed to his mind by the Holy Spirit, laying him under obligations never felt before, he loathes sin as hateful and dishonoring to the God of mercy, and as having filled to the brim the cup of the Savior's agony. On all the powers of his body and faculties of his soul; on all he is, and on all he has, with full heart and melting eye, he inscribes "Holiness unto the Lord;"—and from that time forward, the authority of God is his rule, the grace of God his motive, the glory of God his end, and the blessing of God his portion. "Whether he lives, he lives to the Lord; and whether he dies, he dies to the Lord; living and dying, he is the Lord's."

It is thus that "faith worketh by love." When the divine character, as revealed in the Gospel, becomes the object of belief, it becomes at the same time the object of affection. Holy love from God to man is what the Gos-

pel reveals; holy love from man to God is what the Gospel inspires. Faith begets love, and love obedience. Love is the immediate impulse to action, the main-spring of the moral machinery; — faith, or the "belief of the truth," is what maintains its elasticity and force. Love is the vital energy of the living frame: the truth, received by faith, is the food by which that vital energy is kept in active and efficient vigor.

Modifications arising from the discoveries of the Gospel in the exercise of the two great principles of the law, the love of God, and of our neighbor. 1. Of love to God.

We have formerly seen, that the two great principles of the divine law, as given to men, are, the love of God, and the love of our neighbor; and that there are the strongest grounds for believing, that these, substantially, are the principles of morals throughout the universe: that in all worlds, love to the Creator and love to fellow creatures constitute "the fulfilling of the law." These two comprehensive principles, however, have been subjected to special modifications by the circumstances of peculiarity, in which, under the gracious administration of God, the Gospel has placed our fallen world. We conceive, that, throughout the universe of intelligent being, there must exist a general manifestation of Deity, in the purity and benevolence of his character, — such a manifestation being obviously indispensable, as the foundation either of the love of complacence, or the love of gratitude. The former cannot be felt towards an "unknown God;" nor the latter towards a God of whose goodness there is no experience. But of this manifestation there may be various kinds and various degrees. In no two worlds may it be precisely alike; and the diversity of the manifestation may give rise, in every world, to its own modified variety of obligation, and to its own peculiarity of complacence and of

gratitude. To *our* world, according to the discoveries of the Gospel, the universal Ruler stands in a special relation, — a relation corresponding to our fallen condition and character, of the highest grandeur and the deepest interest, — the relation of the GOD OF GRACE, the GOD OF SALVATION. The moral philosophy of the universe (if I may be allowed so bold an expression) rests on the manifestation to the universe, of the existence, and character, and will of the universal Governor; — and in the general principles of this philosophy, our own world is comprehended. In the *existence* of God we have the universal foundation of morals; in the *character* of God, the universal principles of morals; in the *will* of God, the universal law of morals.

But just as, within the limits of our own world itself, while there are great general moral principles that bind alike all the millions of its population, there are, at the same time, peculiarities of obligation arising from an endless variety of relations, both national and domestic; so, in the universe, while the countless myriads of its intelligent inhabitants may all, with a sublime simplicity, be regarded as, in like manner, bound by the same principles, the principles of love to their Creator and love to their fellow creatures; — yet in each of its unnumbered worlds, there may subsist, from original constitution, or from subsequent events, peculiarities of its own, by which it is distinguished from all the rest. If, with respect to others, this be supposition only, we know that, with respect to our own, it is a fact. As an apostate province of the universal empire, under an administration of mediatorial mercy, its condition and its obligations are alike peculiar; — so that, were the moral philosophy of the universe ever so correctly illustrated, the moral philosophy

of our own world must be miserably defective and erroneous, if the wonderful specialities of its condition, and of the divine relations to it in the mystery of redeeming grace, are not rightly understood, and duly estimated. As the God of salvation, the Father of all has given us, in the mediatorial work of his Son, a manifestation of his character, in its full perfection of attractive loveliness, combining the unsullied purity of its holiness, and the infinite generosity of its benevolence. Our love of moral esteem, therefore, and our love of gratitude, ought, both the one and the other, to bear proportion to this special manifestation. Our complacence is not complacence in God's general loveliness only, but in the special aspect of that loveliness as it appears "in the face of Jesus Christ:" our gratitude is not gratitude for those fruits alone of the divine goodness which we share with all, but for the special and appropriate blessings of his saving grace; — it is the gratitude, not of creatures merely, debtors to Providence, — but of redeemed sinners, debtors to mercy. This is the gratitude that is specially due to God in our apostate world; — without which, among those to whom the tidings of his mercy come, no other gratitude, in whatever terms professed, can be genuine or acceptable; the refusal or the acceptance of the proffered mercy being the test of continued or relinquished alienation of heart.

By the constitution of the scheme of redemption, it may further be observed, there have been introduced modifications of the general principle of love to God, corresponding to the parts which the persons in the ever blessed Trinity are represented as respectively fulfilling in that scheme. There is love to the Father, for "not sparing his own Son;" — there is love to the Son, for the grace

that indueed him, "though he was rich, for our sakes to become poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich:" — and there is love to the Holy Spirit, as the gracious Agent in the discovery to the mind, and application to the heart, of the love of the Father and the grace of the Son, — as the Regenerator of sinners, and the Purifier and Comfortor and Preserver of believers. These distinctions belong essentially to the principles of Christian Ethics. The affections, however, are not distinct, in any such sense as to admit of one of them being in exercise without the others. The Father cannot be loved without the Son, nor the Son without the Father, nor the Father and the Son without the Spirit. Neither are they affections that at all interfere with each other, so as that augmented intensity in one must be accompanied with a corresponding abatement in another. They are, on the contrary, necessarily proportionals to each other; so that, instead of one cooling as another warms, the temperature of each is the temperature of all. The love of the Father, the love of the Son, and the love of the Spirit, towards us, are the united love of the one Godhead, necessarily and eternally equal: — of this love, the scheme of redemption is the joint result and manifestation; and the love with which it is returned is a joint and equal gratitude, the same in measure and in operation,

> "To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
> The God whom we adore!"

2. Of the love of our neighbor. — Light in which the gospel teaches us chiefly to view him

Besides the peculiarities of obligation and exercise, thus introduced by the special administration under which our world is placed into the first of the two great principles of the law, the love of God; there are also peculiarities, originating from the same cause, in reference to

the second, the love of our neighbor. The law which enjoins us to "love our neighbor as ourselves," is certainly to be interpreted as comprehending all the circumstances in which our neighbors can be placed; — but there is one character, of paramount interest, in which the gospel teaches us to regard mankind; — I mean the character of *fellow sinners*, involved in the same guilt and ruin with ourselves, and standing in need of the same salvation. It is in this "low estate" that the eye of God has "looked upon" our race, and that the 'mercy which endureth forever" hath visited us. It is in this "low estate," therefore, that every believer of the gospel will most especially regard his fellow men; and it is to their delieverance from it that he will direct, with the tenderest pity and the most ardent zeal, the efiorts of his benevolence. He will co-operate with the *providence* of God, in promoting, by every means in his power, their temporal benefit; but with special earnestness will he co-operate with the *grace* of God in seeking their everlasting good.

Christian benevolence must, in this respect, be formed upon the pattern of the divine. Divine benevolence has expended its chief resources on mankind as sinners. Their salvation has been the grand problem of infinite wisdom, — the grand manifestation of infinite love. The benevolence that negligently overlooks, or scornfully disregards, this greatest of ends, is not of God. The mind in which it lodges is no in unison with the divine. In the heart that has received the gospel, the love to man, which the law enjoins, will contemplate the guilt and misery in which the gospel finds him, and seek, as its first aim, to put him in possession of the pardon and the blessedness which the gospel provides for him. The gospel, as the interpreter of the law, will stimulate to all

possible efforts for the diffusion of its own saving truths; and the grand field of Christian philanthropy will be "the world lying in the wicked one." Under its illumination and influence, love to our neighbor, while far from being indifferent to his temporal well-being, will especially take into its account of duty the whole extent of his immortal existence; the benevolence that confines itself to the body and to time, while it overlooks the soul and eternity, being infinitely more unreasonable than the kindness which, with regard to the body, would busy itself, with all the promptitude and assiduity of concern, in carefully binding up a wounded finger, while it left a virulent and deadly distemper to prey upon the vitals with unheeded, unmitigated, and fatal fury.

Special love to the household of faith.

There is, moreover, a peculiar love, to the requisition of which no attentive reader of the New Testament can be a stranger. It may be regarded as a branch of the more general principle; but, while it is more limited in the range of its objects, it differs also, in some respects, and that essentially, in its nature. It is the love that unites the members of "the household of faith," — the joint partakers of the regenerating grace of the Spirit, — the "children of God by faith in Christ Jesus:" — it is the *natural affection*, if I may so express myself, of the spiritual family of God. "He who loveth him that begat, loveth them also that are begotten of him." This is a very different principle from the benevolence, or love of general good will, which comprehends all mankind. It is love for God's sake, whose children its objects are, and whose image they bear; it is love for Christ's sake, the divine author of their common salvation; it is love "for the truth's sake," the ground of their hopes, the source of their joys, the bond of their union. It is love

that includes the feeling of complacence as well as that of good will. Of this description of love a great deal is said in the New Testament: — and into not a few mistakes have interpreters fallen, — mistakes which have thrown obscurity upon the meaning, and introduced confusion and weakness into the reasoning, of the inspired penmen, — from their not duly distinguishing between this peculiar affection and the more enlarged principle of general good will to men, — and from their explaining passages of the latter that are evidently and exclusively applicable to the former. It is perfectly true, that no man can be a disciple of Christ without general benevolence, — the benevolence that wishes and seeks the good of all: but the love so often spoken of under the designation of "the love of the brethren" is evidently, from its nature, by much the surer, the more appropriate, and the more distinctive test of discipleship. It is of this the Savior himself speaks, when he says, — "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another," * It is to this too the Apostle John refers, when he is distinguishing the children of God from the children of the wicked one: — "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren:" — "let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth: and hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him." † — To interpret such passages of general benevolence, is obviously to deprive them of more than half their point and conclusiveness. Although there can be no properly

* John xiii. 34, 35. † 1 John iii. 14, 18, 19.

principled benevolence that is not founded in devotion, — yet there is sometimes to be seen so much of the gifts and the doings of philanthropy, — gifts and doings of no ordinary generosity and self-denial, — where there is no vestige of this sacred principle, — that general benevolence cannot, in the nature of things, be so distinctive a criterion of true discipleship as the peculiar love which has for its objects the brethren of Christ, the children of God, and that "delights" in them as "the excellent of the earth." —It is of the same special love that Jesus speaks in describing those works by which, as the Supreme Judge, he will distinguish his own people, — the "blessed of his Father," — in the great day. The works specified by him are not works of general benevolence, and ought not to be confounded with them: — they are works of which he says, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of *these my brethren*," — (pointing to the redeemed multitude on his right hand,) "ye did it *unto me*." They are works, then, done from love to his people, and consequently from love to himself; — and this love implies and presupposes the knowledge and the faith of that testimony in which his character and his grace are revealed to men.

Conclusion.

The design of this series of Lectures has been to illustrate and establish GENERAL PRINCIPLES. To enter into the minuter details of Christian morals, and to discuss the question of casuistry to which, either in themselves or in the terms in which they are conveyed, the preceptive injunctions of the Christian Record have given rise, has not been within the range of subject contemplated by me at the outset. At this, some may be disappointed. I cannot help it. I was satisfied that the field of general principles was of quite sufficient extent

for the prescribed series; — and it was errors, as they seemed to me, in general principles, that I was most anxious to point out, and to correct. With what success this has been done, others must determine. Neither has it formed part of my plan, to consider the important question of *the identity of Old and New Testament morality:* between which, in my apprehension, there has often been conceived to exist a much wider difference than either any reasonable principle could have led us to anticipate, or Scripture, fairly interpreted, warrants us to believe. Great injustice, as it appears to me, has, in this particular, been done to the Old Testament Scriptures. But it is a subject, however important and interesting, of too large extent, and involving too many points of "doubtful disputation," to admit of my so much as touching it.

I must hasten to a conclusion, resisting the temptation to linger on these and other topics. There is a perfect harmony between the law and the gospel. The latter, instead of "making void" the former, establishes it; assuming, proving, and illustrating, its immaculate and immutable perfection. It was the transgression of the law that rendered the provisions of the gospel necessary for the recovery of the transgressor, — his recovery to the forfeited favor and the lost image of his God. And what are those provisions? They are such as "magnify the law and make it honorable." The righteousness of Jesus fulfills its demands, and his atonement exhausts its sanction; so that both its demands and its sanction are recognized as divine. And, while the law is thus honored, maintained in all the fullness of its authority, — in the ground of the sinner's justification; it is not less honored in the spiritual change which, by the gospel instrumentally, and by the Spirit of God efficiently, is produced in

the sinner's character. For in what does this change consist? Is it not in his having "the law written in his heart, and put in his inward parts?" What is there higher or better which the gospel can effect for man, than bringing back his sinful nature to spiritual conformity with the great principles of the law? By effecting this, it restores him at once to the purity, the glory, and the felicity of his original nature.

The gospel is the divine method for man's recovery;—and, whatever the wise men of this world, in the plenitude of their philosophical loftiness, may think or say respecting it, it has been found hitherto, and it will be found henceforward, that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God stronger than men." "After that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the preaching of foolishness to save them that believe." In the moral revolutions which it effected on characters of all descriptions, the gospel proved itself, before the very eyes of men, to be "the power of God unto salvation." The salvation wrought by it was not a thing secret and future;—it was present and visible. The preachers of the cross could point to the many trophies of its power; and, enumerating all the varieties of unrighteous, impure, and profligate character, could say—"Such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." "Ye were the servants of sin; but ye have from the heart obeyed that new Master to whom ye were delivered over:"—"ye were once darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light."

And the "foolishness" of the cross is still the destined means by which the progressive regeneration of the world

is to be effected. What has philosophy done? Where are her triumphs? Where her trophies? Where the hearts she has renewed? Where the characters that have experienced her converting and transforming power? Where are the tribes which she has "turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God?" Her conquests are all prospective; her triumphs all promissory; her vauntings all of what is yet to be done. To no one thing more appropriately and emphatically than to the boastings of human philosophy, is the poet's lines applicable —

"Man never *is*, but always *to be* blest."

But the gospel can point to the past as well as to the future. It has done much: — and it is not to its shame, but to the shame of its professed believers, that its achievements have as yet been so limited. Had Christians felt as they ought their obligations to the God of grace, they would have done more, and given more, and prayed more: — yes, much more: — and "the word of the Lord would have run," faster and further, and have been more abundantly "glorified." Even as it is, — wherever the gospel makes its way, — wherever the word of the Lord takes effect, it shows itself, as it did of old, to be still "the power of God unto salvation." It can still point everywhere to the subjects of its subduing and regenerating influence. It can point to hearts of which the enmity has been slain, and which have been devoted, in holy consecration, to God, — "hearts of stone" that have become "hearts of flesh;" it can point to the licentious, whose vileness has been purified; to the cruel, whose ferocity has been tamed; — to blasphemers, that have learned to pray; to drunkards, noted for sobriety; to liars,

that are men of truth, and thieves, that "restore fourfold;" to the proud, humbled to the "meekness and gentleness of Christ;" to oppressors, that have laid aside their "rod of iron," and "broken every yoke;" to extortioners, that have ceased to "grind the faces of the poor," and are distinguished for justice and generosity; — to sinners of every description and of every grade, that have relinquished the ways of evil, and are "living soberly, righteously, and godly." In the heathen world, idolatry, with all its attendant fooleries, impurities, atrocities, and bacchanalian revelries, gives way before it; and "the gods that have not made the heavens and the earth perish from off the earth and from under those heavens:" — and "Jehovah, the true God, the living God, and the everlasting King," is reinstated in the honor and the worship which are his exclusive due — "One God, and his Name One." The reception of the divine mercy is accompanied with willing subjection to the divine authority. The gospel and the law go hand in hand. When the convictions of the law have induced the acceptance of the gospel, the grace of the gospel endears the precepts of the law, which are then regarded, not merely as the commands of authority, but as the requirements of love, the intimations of the will of the God of mercy. As the reign of Christ extends, the law of love prevails, — of love to God, and love to men; and "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" are the blessed results. It is by the progressive extension of the saving power of the gospel, and the widening prevalence of the principles of the Redeemer's reign, among men of "every kindred and tongue and people and nation," — that those "scenes such as earth saw never," — those scenes of millennial glory which the prophetic word foretells, are to be realized

in this our apostate world. And when those scenes shall have lasted their predicted time, — "then cometh the end," when the mediatorial kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, a temporary branch of the great general administration of the divine government, having answered all the glorious and happy ends of its institutions, shall be "delivered up to God, even the Father," — resigned by Him who has swayed with perfect and illustrious success the sceptre of his delegated reign, — "that the Godhead may be all in all!" Then, in heaven, shall be summed up forever the grand moral purposes of the plan of mercy. When, at the resurrection of the just, "this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, and death shall have been swallowed up in victory," the multitude of the "redeemed from among men" shall enter on the full fruition of the purity and the joy of eternity. The character of Deity, as "Light" and "Love," shall be gloriously apparent in the holy and happy result. Those eternal principles of rectitude, which subsisted in the nature of the divine Being before creation commenced, which were the features of the image in which man was formed, and of which the violation and abandonment were his dishonor and his ruin, shall be restored to their paramount authority and legitimate operation. The light and love of the Godhead shall find a mirror in every bosom: — and in the perfection of knowledge, and purity, and benevolence, and joy, the blessed inhabitants shall realize what their faith had believed, their hope had anticipated, and their imagination had tried to picture, but what, in experience, will be found to transcend, by infinite degrees, their loftiest and most enlarged conceptions, — the happiness of A SINLESS WORLD!

NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

NOTE A. Page 19.

On the subject of the piety of men of science, the Rev. Mr. Whewell, in his Bridgewater Treatise, a most interesting and valuable work, writes as follows: — "The opinion illustrated in the last chapter, that the advances which men make in science tend to impress upon them the reality of the divine government of the world, has often been controverted. Complaints have been made, and especially of late years, that the growth of piety has not always been commensurate with the growth of knowledge in the minds of those who make nature their study. Views of an irreligious character have been entertained, it is sometimes said, by persons eminently well instructed in all the discoveries of modern times, no less than by the superficial and ignorant. Those who have been supposed to deny, or to doubt the existence, the providence, the attributes of God, have in many cases been men of considerable eminence and celebrity for their attainments in science. The opinion that this is the case appears to be extensively diffused; and this persuasion has probably often produced inquietude and grief in the breasts of pious and benevolent men.

"This opinion, concerning the want of religious convictions among those who have made natural philosophy their leading pursuit, has probably gone far beyond the limits of the real fact. But, if we allow that there are any strong cases to countenance such an opinion, it may be worth our while to consider how far they admit of any satisfactory explanation. The fact appears at first sight to be at variance with the view we have given of the impression produced

by scientific discovery; and it is moreover always a matter of uneasiness and regret, to have men of eminent talents and knowledge opposed to doctrines which we consider as important truths.

"We conceive that an explanation of such cases, if they should occur, may be found in a very curious and important circumstance belonging to the process by which our physical sciences are formed. The first discovery of new general truths, and the development of these truths when once obtained, are two operations extremely different — imply different mental habits, and may easily be associated with different views and convictions on points out of the reach of scientific demonstration. There would, therefore, be nothing surprising or inconsistent with what we have maintained above, if it should appear, that while original discoverers of laws of nature are peculiarly led to believe the existence of a supreme intelligence and purpose; the far greater number of cultivators of science, whose employment it is to learn from others these general laws, and to trace, combine, and apply their consequences, should have no clearness of conviction or security from error on this subject, beyond what belongs to persons of any other class."— *Astronomy and General Physics considered with reference to Natural Theology*, pp. 323 — 325.

The subject of the difference in the amount of impression made by the *discovery* of general laws, and by their mere subsequent *application* by processes of deduction, is discussed with much ingenuity, and, it may be admitted, so far at least as abstract *tendency* is concerned, with reason and truth. — The legitimate tendency indeed of scientific knowledge cannot be questioned, any more than the legitimate tendency of the general observation of nature. If there are in nature the manifestations of the existence, and of the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator, the tendency of such observation must be to produce the belief of his being and perfections, and the sentiments and affections towards him which are appropriate to his character. It is the existence, the abundance, and the tendency of the evidence, that renders men "without excuse," when they fail of right discernment of faith, and fear, and love, and adoration, and service.

Now, if, the more closely nature is investigated, and the more intimately her operations are known, the more clearly and convincingly do the proofs of a divine original come forth; then must the tendency of scientific knowledge to the production of faith and piety,

be proportionally stronger than the general and superficial observation of nature;—and, as a necessary consequence, in every case in which these are not the result, the inexcusableness must be the greater. While such is the proper tendency of knowledge, there must be some sadly counteracting tendencies in human nature, by which its legitimate effects are prevented, when in any instance they do not appear. When Mr. Whewell speaks of the manifold "perversions" of the universal "belief of a supernatural and presiding power," as being "manifestly the work of caprice and illusion, and vanishing at the first ray of sober inquiry," (page 294,) he appears to indicate a more favorable estimate of human nature than the Apostle Paul had, when, assigning the cause of the departure of mankind from the original and right conceptions of Deity, he says, "They did not like to retain God in their knowledge." When he adds, "Those who have traced the progress of human thought on other subjects, will not think it strange, that, while the fundamental persuasion of a Deity was thus irremovably seated in the human mind, the development of this conception into a consistent, pure, and steadfast belief in one Almighty and Holy Father and God, should be long missed, or never attained, by the struggle of the human faculties; should require long reflection to mature it, and "the aid of revelation to establish it in the world,"—I hardly know what to think. I am quite at a loss to reconcile such representations with the obvious dictates of revealed truth. There seems to be assumed on original ignorance of the unity and attributes of the true God;—a tendency in the human mind, from this ignorance, or mere "general persuasion of a Deity," towards clearer, fuller, purer, and more exalted conceptions of his nature and character;—such a difficulty in the discovery as to render it no matter of surprise, though it should be "long missed, or even never attained;"—and the ascription of the discovery to human reason, and of the maturing of it to "long reflection," while all that was required of revelation was its "aid to establish it in the world."

It seems to me, that in the Scriptures the very reverse of all these positions is maintained;—that the right knowledge of God was originally possessed;—that the tendency of human nature, on such subjects, as evinced by an experiment of thousands of years, has ever been, not from wrong to right, but from right to wrong,—not from ignorance to knowledge, but from knowledge to ignorance;—the first knowledge having been universally lost, and there being no

instance of any "struggle of the human faculties" having ever restored it, independently of revelation, or of foreign interference on the part of those who enjoyed its light;—and that, at the same time, such is the simplicity and the clearness of the lesson taught by nature of "eternal power and Godhead," as to render men universally "without excuse," in not having retained it at first, or learned it afterwards. It is a grievous mistake to regard idolatry as if it were only the infancy of true religion, the result of the first efforts of the human mind towards the attainment of true knowledge, the religious principle in its rudimental state, the embryo or germ of a better system. This is precisely the reverse of the fact. Instead of the infancy of true religion, idolatry is its wretched and dotard degeneracy;—instead of the first feeling of the human mind after truth, it is the worthless product of its insensate proneness to error;—instead of the right plant in its germinant weakness, it is the mass of putridity left by its decay.

Instead of a "progress in human thought" on such subjects, from darkness to light, the application to them of human wisdom has invariably produced an exemplification of the Apostle's words,—"Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." The philosophers of this world, while they have partaken in those tendencies to forget God, which are common to the whole race,—to "say unto the Almighty, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways,"—are the subjects at the same time of other tendencies which are peculiar to themselves;—I refer to all that may be comprehended in the pride of science,—the high-mindedness of unsanctified intellect; the strength of which not a few have testified, who have themselves known it in their experience, and have afterwards become the subjects of the humbling grace of God. It is in consequence of this pride, that "the things of God" are so often "hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes." And if these things be so, while we admit that the legitimate tendency of discovery in the works of God is to impress the conviction of his being and perfections, more strongly than its subsequent application to known phenomena,—yet, as there is, in such discovery, in proportion to its rarity, something more elating to the mind of its fortunate author, giving distinction to his name, investing him with the great *éclat* of genius, with the brighter halo of scientific celebrity,—it may admit of question whether this moral tendency may not go far to counteract the salutary influence of the other. All

true religion must be founded in humility; and whatever fosters pride, destroys piety.

Even, indeed, if the peculiar tendency of *discovery* in science were admitted to its full extent, and were free from any such counteraction of a moral kind, we might remark how much smaller the number of discoverers must ever be, than the number of those who only apply the principles and laws discovered to known phenomena; how many fewer there must ever be of *original geniuses*, than of inferior, though respectable and even eminent, speculators on the results of their genius; and that, therefore, even on Mr. Whewell's own principle, the number of men of science distinguished for piety might be expected to be proportionally small. But after all, everything, in such a question, depends upon what is meant by piety: and on this subject I must simply refer to what is said in the text, (pp. 18—20.) All will concur in the regret, that "a coalition so natural and seemly as that of science and piety, should ever be wanting." In Mr. Whewell's enumeration of examples of the coalition, there are certainly some, whose piety must be regarded, if we take the divine word for its standard, as of a very vague and questionable kind. But it would be alike invidious and presumptuous to enter into the discussion of personal character.

NOTE B. Page 36.

On the subject of these strictures, I have much pleasure in introducing the following sentiments of Dr. Chalmers, from a work published after the composition and delivery of this Lecture—The Bridgewater Treatise:

"The great error of our academic theism, as commonly treated, is, that it expresses no want; that it reposes on its own fancied sufficiency; and that all its landing-places are within itself, and along the uttermost limits of its own territory. It is no reproach against our philosophical moralists, that they have not stepped beyond the threshold of that peculium, which is strictly and appropriately theirs; or not made incursion into another department than their own. The legitimate complaint is, that on taking leave of their disciples, they

warn them not of their being only yet in the outset or in the prosecution of a journey, instead of having reached the termination of it. They, in fact, take leave of them in the middle of an unprotected highway, when they should have raised a finger-post of direction to the places that lie beyond. The paragraph which we have now extracted* was just such a finger-post, though taken down, we deeply regret to say, by the very hand that had erected it. Our veneration for his name must not restrain the observation, that by this he undid the very best service which a professor of moral science can render to humanity. Along the confines of its domain, there should be raised, in every quarter, the floating signals of distress, that its scholars, instead of being lulled into the imagination that now they may repose as in so many secure and splendid dwelling places, should be taught to regard them only as towers of observation, whence they have to look for their ulterior guidance and their ulterior supplies, to the region of a conterminous theology."

After presenting in another paragraph, briefly but beautifully, the simple philosophy of the atonement, as exhibited in the New Testament, and as meeting one of the chief difficulties in "the theism of nature," the Doctor thus proceeds:

"This specimen will best illustrate of moral philosophy, even in its most finished state, that it is not what may be called a terminating science. It is at best but a science *in transitu;* and its lessons are those of a preparatory school. It contains but the rudiments of a nobler acquirement; and he discharges best the functions of a teacher, not who satiates but who excites the appetite, and then leaves it wholly unappeased. This arises from the real state and bearing of the science, as being a science, not so much of doctrines as of desiderata. At most it leaves its scholars in a sort of twilight obscurity; and if a just account is rendered of the subject, there will unavoidably be the feeling, that, instead of having reached a secure landing-place, we have broken off as in the middle of an unfinished demonstration."—Vol. II. pp. 298—301.

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* The reference is to a paragraph which appeared in the first edition of Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments, but in subsequent editions was omitted, on the subject of conscious guilt, and the natural suggestions of the human mind and corresponding discoveries of revelation, as to atonement. The paragraph is one of deep interest, though, as might have been expected, defective in its theology. It is given also by the late Archbishop Magee, in his Discourses and Dissertations on Atonement and Sacrifice. Vol. 1. pp. 209—211.

Many of the views in the chapter from which these extracts are made, "On the Defects and Uses of Natural Theology," are exceedingly important. It were well if the lessons of moral philosophy were taught in the manner described and recommended, not as final, but only as introductory and preparatory. Still, however, it ought to be recollected, that there is a large proportion of students who attend the Moral Philosophy class, who do not subsequently pass into the province of a "conterminous theology;" so that, even *were* the subjects so treated, there would necessarily, to such youths, be a very grievous defect; a defect which, by leaving their minds under the influence of partial impressions of truth, might be attended with not a few of the consequences of error. The manner in which the subjects usually *are* treated in the "prelections of academic theism" is, by strong implication, admitted to be, in its tendency, injurious even to those who *do* take the further step of advancement—passing over the boundary between the theism of the Ethical Class-room and the Christianity of the Divinity Hall; and instances in verification of this are not wanting, to the lamentable paganizing of pulpit instruction, by denuding Christianity of the uncompromising peculiarity of its most essential articles, or by the accommodation of them to cold philosophic theories. I confess myself strongly inclined to the opinion, that if MORALS are not taken up distinctly upon the principles of revelation, they had better, as subjects of protection to the young, be let alone altogether. Both natural religion and morality belong properly to the province of theology. And not only (as in a subsequent part of this series of Lectures I have endeavored to show) can there be no true morality without religion; but the teaching of moral virtues to sinful creatures, on grounds independent of the mercy revealed by the gospel, is an inlet to the most anti-scriptural and soul-ruining delusions. I cannot take lower ground than this, without renouncing my Bible; whose decisions, with regard to the means of acceptance with God, I must regard as the only *philosophy*, because the only *truth*.

NOTE C. Page 38.

Mr. Douglas, of Cavers, in his volume entitled "Errors in Religion," has the following spirited remarks on the early influence of philosophy, in adulterating the purity and obnubilating the simiplicity of the Christian doctrine:

"Independent of any direct heresies, erroneous methods of considering Christianity became prevalent, from the indiscriminate study and admiration of Gentile philosophy. Each of the Christian Fathers, who affected a reputation for literature, naturally adopted the favorite opinions of some philosophic school; and thus every speculative sect came to mingle their own peculiar errors in that incoherent and discordant mass of opinions which formed the Christian literature of antiquity. Few attempts have had less foundation to proceed upon than the endeavor to make the Christian Fathers pass for the supreme judges of controversy and the oracles of religion. Nothing can be more vague than their conclusions, nor more weak than their arguments, nor more variable than the tendency of their writings. They might, notwithstanding the weakness of their judgment, have been valuable, as furnishing facts; but in these they are lamentably deficient, and hence the meagreness of church history. When appealed to as authorities, they lend themselves by turns to every side; when resorted to for information, they furnish little but conjectures. It is well, however, that Christianity should have small obligation to its early advocates, and that religion should rest upon the power of God, and not upon the authority of men. It is well also, that a great gulf should be placed between the inspired and the uninspired Christian writers.

"Many of the Fathers, as they are called, were but recent converts from paganism, who were better acquainted with the superstition they had left than with the revelation they had embraced. Many were more attentive to the study of philosophy than to the search of scriptural truth. The caution of St. Paul was lost upon them, to beware of 'science, falsely so called.' The emanative system, with all its errors, spread far and wide, under the authority of Origen, and with the aid of his allegorial interpretations. In the hands of the master of Origen, Ammonius, and his fellow-disciple Plotinus, the absurdities of Paganism, by the supposition of an inner sense contained in them, had been made to coincide with the dreams

of philosophy. The truths of Christianity were now to be explained away by the same subtle process."——And, after a rapid enumeration of some of the results of this and various other sources of corruption, he adds:—"To sum up all, Aristotle, after stoutly defending Paganism, at last lent the Christians his vexatious logic, to exasperate the multitude of their disputes, and to split and subdivide every error to infinity."—Pp. 55—57.

This leads us at once to the schoolmen, of whom and of whose labors the reader may take the following brief but forcible sketch from the hand of a master:

"Surely, like as many substances in nature, which are solid, do putrefy and corrupt into worms, so is it the property of good and sound knowledge to putrefy and dissolve into a number of subtle, idle, unwholesome, and, as I may term them, vermiculate questions, which have indeed a kind of quickness, and life of spirit, but no soundness of matter, or goodness of quality! This kind of degenerate learning did chiefly reign among the schoolmen, who, having sharp and strong wits, and abundance of leisure, and small variety of reading; but their wits being shut up in the cells of a few authors, chiefly Aristotle, their dictator, as their persons were shut up in the cells of monasteries and colleges; and knowing little history, either of nature or of time, did, out of no great quantity of matter, and infinite agitation of wit, spin out unto us those laborious webs of learning, which are extant in their books. For the wit and mind of man, if it work upon matter, which is the contemplation of the creatures of God, worketh according to the stuff, and is limited thereby; but if it work upon itself, as the spider worketh his web, then it is endless, and brings forth indeed cobwebs of learning, admirable for the fineness of thread and work, but of no substance or profit."—*Lord Bacon—Proficiency and Advancement of Learning.*

"The schoolmen's waste of ingenuity and frivolous subtlety of disputation," says Archbishop Whately, "need not be enlarged upon. It may be sufficient to observe, that their fault did not lie in their diligent study of logic, and the high value they set upon it, but on their utterly mistaking the true nature and object of the science; and by the attempt to employ it for purposes of physical investigation, involving everything in a mist of words, to the exclusion of sound philosophical investigation. Their errors may serve to account for the strong terms in which Bacon sometimes appears to con-

sure logical pursuits; but that this censure was intended to bear against the extravagant perversions, not the legitimate cultivation of the science, may be proved from his own observation on the subject, in his *Advancement of Learning.*"—*Elements of Logic*, Introd. pp. 8, 9.

"The schoolmen," says Sir James Mackintosh, "were properly theologians, who employed philosophy only to define and support that system of Christian belief which they and their contemporaries had embraced. The scholastic system was a collection of dialectical subtleties, contrived for the support of the corrupted Christianity of that age, by a succession of divines, whose extraordinary powers of distinction and reasoning were morbidly enlarged in the long meditation of the cloister, by the exclusion of every other pursuit, and the consequent palsy of every other faculty; who were cut off from all the materials on which the mind can operate, and doomed forever to toil in defence of what they must never examine; to whom their age and their condition denied the means of acquiring literature, of observing nature, or of studying mankind." Of the middle age, however, of which, as the age of darkness, we are wont to speak with a mixed emotion of wonder, and scorn, and pity, he says, "It is not unworthy of notice, on account of the subterranean current which flows through it, from the speculations of ancient to those of modern times. That dark stream must be uncovered before the history of the European understanding can be thoroughly comprehended. It was lawful for the emancipators of reason, in their first struggles, to carry on deadly war against the schoolmen. The necessity has long ceased, they are no longer dangerous; and it is now felt by philosophers, that it is time to explore and estimate that vast portion of the history of philosophy, from which we have scornfully turned our eyes."—*Prelim. Dissert.* sect. 3.

NOTE D. Page 69.

I HAVE classed these three eminent writers together, and have given a very succinct statement of the general principles of their system. In terms of singular modesty, such as may well make the

present writer fearful of the charge of presumption, Sir James Mackintosh thus states what appeared to him a difference of considerable magnitude, between the system of Cudworth and that of Clarke:

"As far as it is not presumptuous to attempt a distinction between modes of thinking foreign to the mind which makes the attempt, and modes of expression scarcely translatable into the only technical language in which that mind is wont to think, it seems that the systems of Cudworth and Clarke, though they appear very similar, are in reality different in some important points of view. The former, a Platonist, sets out from those IDEAS, (a word, in this acceptation of it, which has no cosresponding term in English,) the eternal models of created things, which, as the Athenian master taught, pre-existed in the everlasting intellect, and, of right, rule the will of every inferior mind. The illustrious scholar of Newton, with a manner of thinking more natural to his age and school, considered primarily the very relations of things themselves; conceived, indeed, by the Eternal Mind, but which, if such inadequate language may be pardoned, are the law of its will, as well as the model of its works." —*Prelim. Diss.* p. 332.

The distinction thus expressed is one, it will readily be admitted, rather too abstruse to be very readily, or very clearly apprehended; nor is it easy to think about it without the mind getting bewildered, or consequently to write about it in terms that shall convey conceptions sufficiently distinct. I would ask, however, with all diffidence, If these "IDEAS," as the "eternal *models* of created things," "pre-existed in the Everlasting Intellect," must they not have been the rules of the Divine Will, when that will afterwards gave actual being to those things of which they were the archetypal models? A model is a pattern or rule of procedure. If, in making the distinction, a "law of the Divine Will" is intended to mean something *authoritative*, by which the Divine Will was obliged or bound; it is evident, that there could be no authority extraneous to Deity, and no principles of rectitude but such as had their subsistence in the Divine Mind; so that a "law of the Divine Will" could not, by possibility, have any other meaning than the *necessity* of a conformity between these principles and every divine *volition*. But whether we speak of *ideal models*, or of *laws of the Divine Will*, this necessity is obviously the same: there is the same *necessary*

conformity between the one or the other and those efficient volitions of Deity by which actual existence is imparted.

I cannot help thinking, indeed, that there is in all this a confounding of things that differ. Clarke, according to Sir James, begins with, or primarily considers, *the relations of things themselves*, while Cudworth sets out from the *pre-existent models of created things*. Now I can understand the antithesis between the model of a created thing and the created thing itself,—or (if the language were admissible) between the model of a relation and the relation itself; but the antithesis between the "models of created things" and the "relations of things themselves," I am at a loss to comprehend. It is not in existences, but in the relations subsisting between them, that those fitnesses can possibly have place, in conformity to which the theory of both Cudworth and Clarke pronounces virtue to consist. If the models of *created things* are to be understood of the models of *existences* merely, apart from their *relations*, we can find no place there for the principles of "eternal and immutable morality;" and if they are to be understood as comprehending relations, then am I quite at a loss to conceive the difference, in regard to the conclusions to which we must come, whether these relations be considered *in themselves* or *as pre-existing models* in the Divine Mind. Where, but in the Divine Mind, could the relations of created things subsist, before creation began? And whether viewed as ideally subsisting there, or as actually arising out of creation, they are *the same relations;* and every principle of reasoning about them must be the same.

It is in an *ethical* point of view that Sir James Mackintosh, from the very title of his dissertation, is considering the theories of the two eminent men in question: but, when he speaks of "the very relations of things themselves, as conceived in the Eternal Mind, being the law of its will, as well as the model of its works," we are tempted to remark, that in the "model of its works," when thus set in contradistinction to the "law of its will," there is nothing that belongs to the department of Ethics; so that in fact, he states the system of Clarke *morally*, and that of Cudworth only *intellectually* and *physically*. I have spoken, indeed, of the "ideas or models of created things being the rule of the Divine Will in the creation of those things." By this, however, nothing more is meant, than that, in every act of creative will, there is a necessary con-

formity between that which is brought into being and the ideal archetype of it previously in the Divine Mind. But in this there is nothing *moral*. The necessity is only that which arises from the perfection of *intelligence* and *skill* in the designing mind. That perfection *cannot but do* what is intellectually and physically *best*. But in the other case, the necessity is *moral*. The "eternal fitnesses" which, according to the system of Clarke, correspond to the "relations of things" as eternally present to the Divine Mind, are *moral* fitnesses; and the necessity of this correspondence is a *moral* necessity, arising from the absolute perfection, in the mind where the relations and the fitnesses are conceived, of *moral rectitude;* — that rectitude being nothing different from the necessary attributes of the necessarily existent Being, which, as we may afterwards see, are themselves the standard of moral principles to the universe. — These moral fitnesses belong to Cudworth's system equally with Clarke's; else *it would have nothing properly moral in it*, but would be, in a sense widely different from that in which he meant the designation, an "*intellectual* system."

Sir James Mackintosh states the object and the reasoning of Cudworth, and comments upon them, thus: (The importance of the citation must be my apology for the length of it: to abridge it would neither be justice to the author nor to the scholiast) — "Protagoras of old, and Hobbes, then alive, having concluded that right and wrong were unreal, because they were not perceived by the senses, and because all human knowledge consists in such perceptions, Cudworth attempts to confute them, by disproving that part of their premises which forms the last stated proposition. The mind has many conceptions (νοημαται) which are not cognizable by the senses; and though they are *occasioned* by sensible objects, yet could not be formed but by a faculty superior to sense. The conceptions of justice and duty he places amongst them. The distinction of right from wrong is discerned by reason; and as soon as these words are defined, it becomes evident that it would be a contradiction in terms to affirm that any power, human or divine, could change their nature; or, in other words, make the same act to be just and unjust at the same time. They had existed eternally, in the only mode in which truths can be said to be eternal, in the Eternal Mind; and they were indestructible and unchangeable like that Supreme Intelligence.

"Whatever judgment may be formed of this reasoning, it is manifest that it relates merely to the philosophy of the *understanding*,

and does not attempt any explanation of what constitutes the very essence of morality, its relation to the *will*. That we perceive a distinction between right and wrong, as much as between a triangle and a square, is indeed true; and may possibly lead to an explanation of the reason why men should adhere to the one and avoid the other. But it is not that reason. A command or a precept is not a proposition. It cannot be said that either is true or false. Cudworth, as well as many who succeeded him, confounded the mere apprehension by the understanding that right is different from wrong, with the practical authority of these important conceptions, exercised over voluntary actions, in a totally distinct province of the soul."— *Prelim. Diss.* p. 326.

I must confess myself at a loss to understand the force of this objection. It seems plausible; but I am mistaken if its plausibility arises from anything else than the form of its verbal statement. Though Cudworth conceived *right* and *wrong* to be intellectually discerned — "discerned by reason," — he certainly did not consider that discernment as including in it no more than is contained in the discernment of truth or falsehood in propositions. It should be recollected that the subject is *moral distinctions*. That which is *true* may be said to be *right;* but *right* in this case means no more than its being according to fact: — and that which is *false* may be said to be *wrong;* but in this case also, *wrong* means no more than its *not* being according to fact. True and false propositions with regard to *mind* may also be said, *intellectually*, to be right or wrong. But when the terms right and wrong are used in application to *morals*, it is impossible so to use them, without having in our minds, in connection with *right*, the idea of something we are *under obligation to do*, or at least under *no* obligation *not* to do, — and with *wrong*, of something which we *are* under obligation *not* to do, or which we cannot do without violating an obligation. What difference is there, when we are speaking of moral distinctions, between affirming a thing to be *right* and affirming it to be a thing which we *may* or *ought* to do; or between affirming a thing to be *wrong* and affirming it to be a thing which we *ought not* to do? — Among conceptions that are "not cognizable by the senses," but must be formed "by a faculty superior to sense," Sir J. M. justly represents Cudworth as placing "the conceptions of justice *and duty*." Ought he not to have perceived that the very term *duty* is one that involves *obligation*? The conception of *duty* is the conception of what we

are *under obligation to do*. Does not what Sir James calls "the apprehension by the understanding that right is different from wrong" mean identically the same thing with the apprehension by the understanding that right is what ought to be done, and wrong what ought not to be done? And have not the "important conceptions" of right and wrong invariably involved in them the conception of "practical authority?" If it be alleged, that discerning a thing to be right is merely discerning it to be in harmony with the eternal fitnesses of things; I contend that *this very conformity* includes the idea of *obligation*. All morality has reference to *will*. But, since the eternal fitnesses of things arise from the unchangeable principles of moral rectitude in Deity, to discern anything to be according to these fitnesses, is to discern it to be something with which the *will* of every created intelligence *ought* to be in harmony.

There is a good deal, at the same time, in the general strain of Cudworth's reasoning, that is apt to identify, in the reader's mind, the impressions of truth and falsehood with those of moral right and wrong. The cause of this, however, is obvious. It arises from its being his main object to demonstrate, that moral distinctions are perceived by the mind with the same intuition and the same certainty as first or necessary truths. His whole system rests on the distinction, which he illustrates with an almost tiresome prolixity, between *sense* and *intellection*. In the impressions it receives from sense, the mind is passive; and from this source there can be derived only conceptions of individual things existing without the mind. He allows not to these conceptions, when they go no further, the name of *knowledge*. What he regards as proper knowledge is composed of those general and universal truths which consist in the clear conceptions of the mind acting *within itself*. Everything, according to him, is true, — certainly and necessarily true, — which is clearly intelligible; and *clear intelligibility* is the sole test and criterion of truth. He repeats this frequently. In replying to the natural question, "How a man shall know when his conceptions are conformed to the absolute and immutable natures or essences of things and their unchangeable relations to one another," — he says "we must not go about to look for the criterion of truth without ourselves; and then, in further explanation, adds: — "The criterion of true knowledge is not to be looked for anywhere abroad, without our own minds, neither in the height above nor in the depth beneath, but only in our knowledge and conceptions themselves. For the entity of all theoretical truth is

nothing else but clear intelligibility, and whatever is clearly conceived is an entity and a truth; but that which is false, divine power itself cannot make it to be clearly and distinctly understood, because falsehood is a nonentity, and a clear conception is an entity; and Omnipotence itself cannot make a nonentity to be an entity."—*Etern. and Immut. Moral.* pp. 271, 272. "The true knowledge or science, which exists nowhere but in the mind itself, has no other entity at all besides intelligibility; and, therefore, whatsoever is clearly intelligible is absolutely true:"—the essence of falsehood consists in nothing else but nonintelligibility."—Pp. 275, 276.

It is deserving of notice, that all the illustrations which he produces of these singular positions, are taken from those self-evident propositions, the opposites of which involve a contradiction:—Quod cogitat, est:—æqualia addita æqualibus efficiunt æqualia;—omnis numerus est vel par vel impar:—nihili nulla est affectio, &c.—Pp. 274, 281, &c. Whence we are led to conclude that the system regards the mind's conceptions of essential moral truths as of the same clear and indubitable nature with these;—the perceptions of right and wrong as unavoidable as the perception of the truth of self-evident propositions. Truth, according to Cudworth, does not depend on the nature or make of the faculties; but "be these faculties what they will, clear intellectual conceptions must of necessity be truths, because they are real entities;"—and "whenever any proposition is rightly understood by any one particular mind, whatsoever and wheresoever it be, the truth of it is no private thing, nor relative to that particular mind only, but it is a *catholic and universal truth*, as the Stoics speak, throughout the whole world; nay, it could not fail to be a truth throughout infinite worlds, if there were so many, to all such minds as should rightly understand it."—Pp. 279, and 270, 271. But be the case what it may with regard to those axiomatic truths, the supposition of whose opposites involves contradiction, and which *cannot but appear* in the same light to every mind that understands the terms; it may still be a matter of question, whether the same thing holds with regard to the great articles of *moral science*. Cudworth himself, even after having affirmed that, be our faculties what they will, and let them be supposed to be made how you will, yet, notwithstanding, whatsoever is clearly understood and conceived has an objective entity in it; and must of necessity be true; for a clear conception cannot be nothing," (p. 277,) makes the following admission:—"It cannot be denied but that men are oftentimes de-

ceived, and think they clearly comprehend what they do not."—P. 282. Now this simple admission appears to me to go near to overturn, if it does not absolutely and entirely overturn, the whole of this part of his theory. He adds, it is true, to the preceding admission the saving clause—"But it does not follow from hence, because men sometimes think that they clearly comprehend what they do not, that therefore they can never be certain that they do clearly comprehend anything." But this will not do: it will not keep the theory afloat. For nothing can be more manifest, than that, if "men are *oftentimes deceived*, and *think they clearly comprehend what they do not*," distinct comprehension, or "clear intelligibility," cannot be an infallible criterion of truth. Indeed, one cannot but be both surprised and amused, after having had the position reiterated to satiety, and with a confidence that seems to defy the possibility of objection, that "clear intellectual conceptions," be the faculties of the mind in which they exist what they may, "must of necessity be truths,"—to find the whole discussion closed with the admission, that "men are oftentimes deceived, and think they clearly comprehend what they do not!"—for how, in such cases, is it to be determined whether their comprehensions are, or are not, clear? Is it by some other mind? May not that mind also be deceived?

This theory, of clear intelligibility being the sure criterion of truth, stands exposed moreover to the objection urged in the text against the various systems of morals commented upon, that the understandings whose clear comprehension is thus erected into an infallible criterion of truth or falsehood are understandings under the obscuring and biasing influence of a depraved disposition; the understandings not only of finite but of fallen creatures. How can it ever be, that "clear intelligibility," in *such* minds, should be the unerring test of the true and the false, especially in regard to subjects on which, of all others, the disposition operates with the largest measure of perverting power?

I would only further observe as to the general theory of Cudworth, that it differs from that of Brown, in that the one founds virtue in *original conceptions*, the other in *original emotions*.

NOTE E. Page 71.

HAVING read the Dissertation of Sir James Mackintosh, subsequently to the time when this was written and delivered, I was startled by an objection which he urges against Clarke, for thus comparing moral truth with mathematical certainties:—"The adoption," he says, "of mathematical forms and terms was, in England, a prevalent fashion amongst writers on moral subjects, during a large part of the eighteenth century. The ambition of mathematical certainty on matters concerning which it is not given to man to reach it, is a frailty from which the disciple of Newton ought in reason to have been withheld, but to which he was naturally tempted by the example of his master. Nothing but the extreme difficulty of detaching assent from forms of expression to which it has been long wedded, can explain the fact, that the incautious expressions above cited, into which Clarke was hurried by his moral sensibility, did not awaken him to a sense of the error into which he had fallen. As soon as he had said, that 'a wicked act was as absurd as an attempt to take away the properties of a figure,' he ought to have seen, that principles which led logically to such a conclusion were untrue. As it is an impossibility to make three and three cease to be six, it ought, on his principles, to be impossible to do a wicked act."—*Prelim. Dissert.* p. 328. On the same principle, the comparison which I have here used ought to be objectionable, as implying the *impossibility* of the supposed irreverence of Deity. But this appears to me to be a hypercritical refinement. There may be an impropriety and risk of error, in comparisons drawn from one science to another, when the two are so widely dissimilar as geometry and morals: but in the present instance, the meaning seems abundantly clear. The impossibility expressed is not the impossibility of indulging a wicked disposition, or of doing a wicked act,—it is the impossibility of harmonizing such a disposition, or such an act, with the assumed eternal principles of morals,—these principles consisting in eternal fitnesses to the relations of things as eternally subsisting in the Divine Mind. This is the impossibility which the comparison pronounces to be as great as that of "taking away the properties of a figure," or of filling a sphere with a cube. The inconsistency of the one with those principles of morals that are founded in the eternal fitnesses of things, is as complete as is the inconsistency of the

other with the axiomatic and immutable principles of geometrical science.

"To act without regard to the relations of things," adds Sir James, "as if a man were to choose fire for cooling, or ice for heating, would be the part either of a lunatic or an idiot. The murderer who poisons by arsenic acts agreeably to his knowledge of the power of that substance to kill, which is a relation between two things; as much as the physician, who employs an emetic after the poison, acts upon the belief of the tendency of that remedy to preserve life, which is another relation between two things. All men who seek a good or bad end by good or bad means, must alike conform their conduct to some relation between their actions as means, and their object as an end. All the relations of inanimate things to each other are undoubtedly observed as much by the criminal as by the man of virtue." — *Ibid.*

When Dr. Clarke says that "a wicked act is as absurd as the attempt to take away the properties of a figure," does he not mean that the two are equally absurd *in their respective departments?* — that the one is as preposterously contrary to those eternal fitnesses which constitute the principles of morals, as the other is to those mathematical relations which constitute the principles of geometry? — does not the very fact of his drawing a comparison, or borrowing an analogy, from the one to the other, show, that he considered the two descriptions of relations as essentially different, and moral relations, though capable of such analogical illustration from geometrical, as quite distinct from, and not in any way affected by them? The same is the case with regard to such *physical* relations as those to which Sir James here refers. The fact that the murderer and the physician act alike in conformity to *such* relations for their respective ends, is so far from bringing their respective actions into identity, or even alliance with each other, that I presume Dr. Clarke would have taken an illustration of his position with the same readiness from physical as from geometrical relations, and have pronounced the act of murder as absurd a thing in the department of morals, as, in the department of physics, would be that of "choosing fire for cooling, or ice for heating." But the very use of such a comparison would have shown, in this case as in the other, that it is not on relations universally, and of whatever kind, that he founds the principles of morals, but only on those descriptions of relations, in which the idea of moral fitnesses is susceptible of application; which in no mind

can ever be imagined the case, either with the relations of abstract mathematics, or with those of the physical world. Dr. Clarke may not have been sufficiently guarded in some of his modes of expression and illustration — but possibly this might arise from his not supposing that these different kinds of relations and fitnesses could ever be confounded.

"It is therefore singular," says Sir James, further, "that Dr. Clarke suffered himself to be misled into the representation, that virtue is a conformity to the relations of things universally, vice a universal disregard of them, by the certain, but here insufficient truth, that the former necessarily implied a regard to *certain particular relations*, which were always disregarded by those who chose the latter. The distinction between right and wrong can, therefore, no longer depend on relations as such, but on a particular class of relations. And it seems evident, that no relations are to be considered, except those in which a living, intelligent, and voluntary agent is one of the beings related." — *Ibid.* If Dr. Clarke would have refused this, I have done with him. But I cannot imagine it. To say that the relations on which virtue depends must be relations in which "living, intelligent, and voluntary agents" have part, is no more than to say that it is only such agents that are the subjects of moral principle and moral responsibility. It never entered my mind to imagine, that the relations and fitnesses in which the theory of Clarke finds the principles of morals, were at all the relations between the abstractions of geometry, or the lines and angles of practical mathematics, or the fitnesses of fire to warm and of ice to cool, of arsenic to kill and of an emetic to cure: — and I have already said, that the very way in which Clarke borrows from other departments illustrations for his own, shows the contrary. The general system of morals consists in conformity to eternal fitnesses, — fitnesses, that is, of certain modes of sentiment and feeling, and certain actions and courses of conduct, to certain relations; not, surely, relations which are entirely extraneous to the department of moral agency, but all the relations in which such agency is possible, or by which it is in any way affected. On these universally the general system of morals rests; and in conformity to these universally virtue, considered generally, consists; while particular virtues consist more especially in conformity to particular relations: — just as, in geometry, the science itself rests on a variety of axioms, or first principles; whilst the truth or falsehood of certain problems is demonstrated by,

and turns upon, their agreement or disagreement with one or more of these.

When Sir James adds—"The term *relation* itself, on which Dr. Clarke's system rests, being common to right and wrong, must be struck out of the reasoning,"—I would simply ask, in what sense it is that the term is "*common* to right and wrong," when virtue is defined to consist in *conformity*, and vice in *disconformity* to these relations? It seems to be little better than trifling to say, that vice consists in conformity to relations as well as virtue, because the murderer proceeds upon the relation between arsenic and the constitution of the human body. To me, indeed, it appears that some confusion of ideas, and some injustice to the theory, have arisen from the different meanings of the term *fitness*. By the writer of the article "Moral Philosophy," in the Encyclopædia Britannica, it is stated as an objection, that *fit* must of course mean fit *for some end:* fitness which respects no end being inconceivable.—*Encycl. Brit.* Vol. XIV. p. 361. But is not this, on such a subject, a somewhat unfair application of the term *fitness?* It is understood as signifying *adaptation to an end:*—but in the theory of Clarke, its true meaning is *congruity with existing relations*. This is a sense of the word equally legitimate with the other. Yet it has been said, by the writer referred to, that "to allege of any action that it is *fit*, and yet not fit *for any particular purpose*, is as absurd as to say that the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are *equal*, but neither to each other nor to any other angles." But this proceeds quite on a misunderstanding of the proper meaning of *fitness*, as the term is used in the theory:—for an action may be *fit*, as being *in congruity with a particular relation*, and may be so contemplated by the theorist, without his having in his mind at all its adaptation for any particular purpose.

"If it be said," observes this writer, "that such actions are fit and right, because they tend to promote the harmony of the world and the welfare of mankind, this may be granted; but it overturns the intellectual theory from the foundations; actions which are fit and right only for their consequences, are approved and liked for the sake of their consequences," &c.—All true. But does not this representation discover a misapprehension of the true principle of the system; and this misapprehension arising from a very unaccountable inadvertency as to the meaning of the terms *fit* and *fitness?* And yet, unaccountable as this inadvertency is, Dr. Brown himself,

in his strictures on the theory of Clarke, appears to be, very inexcusably, chargeable with it. Having represented this theory as "supposing virtue to consist in the regulation of our conduct according to certain fitnesses which we perceive in things, or a peculiar congruity of certain relations to each other,"—a representation in which he seems to take the term *fitness* in the sense in which the theorist evidently intended it to be understood,—he afterwards shifts to the other meaning of it, and speaks of *fitness* as if it meant adaptation to an end; observing that "it is to the good or evil of the end that we look, and that we must always look, in estimating the good or evil of the fitness itself;" and that "if it be the nature of the end which gives value to the fitness, it is not the fitness, but the end to which the fitness is subservient, that must be the true object of moral regard."

It was certainly paying no compliment to the sagacity of Dr. Clarke, to imagine that he could have founded virtue in *fitnesses*, understanding the term of *adaptation to ends*, without perceiving that in that case the excellence of virtue depended upon the end, and that his theory resolved itself into that of *utility*. And yet, on the credit of this being the sense in which the word fitness is to be understood, does Dr. Brown sum up his strictures on Clarke's system, in the following (as they appear to me on the ground just mentioned) unwarrantably disrespectful terms:—"Since every human action, in producing any effect whatever, must be in conformity with the fitnesses of things, the limitation of virtue to actions which are in conformity with these fitnesses, has no meaning, unless we have previously distinguished the ends which are morally good from the ends which are morally evil, and limited the conformity of which we speak to the one of these classes. In this case, however, the theory of fitnesses, it is evident, far from accounting for the origin of moral distinctions, proceeds on the admission of them: it pre-supposes a distinctive love of certain virtuous ends, by their relations to which all the fitnesses of actions are to be measured; and the system of Dr. Clarke, therefore, if stripped of its pompous phraseology, and translated into common language, is nothing more than the very simple truism, or tautology, that to act virtuously is to act in conformity to virtue."—*Brown's Lectures*, Lect. 76.

I appeal to the reader, whether this reduction of the theory of Clarke to a worthless truism, be not founded rather in the misrepresentation, on the part of the commentator, of the chief term he has

employed in propounding it, than in the faultiness of the theory itself. My object is not to uphold it; but to do justice to its acute and able author. Let the term fitness be understood as meaning *congruity with relations*, rather than *adaptation to ends*,—and the contemptuous estimate of the theory, which has just been quoted, loses its basis.

NOTE F. Page. 87.

THERE were here introduced, in the first edition, the following sentences:—"He adds, 'Though the three sides of a right-angled triangle exist in the triangle itself, and constitute it what it is, what we term the properties of such a triangle do not exist in it, but are results of a peculiar capacity of the comparing mind.' I confess myself not metaphysician enough to comprehend how 'the comparing mind' should discover the properties of a right-angled triangle, unless they 'existed in it;'—and it appears to me, moreover, exceedingly incorrect to say, that the three sides of the triangle, which are admitted to exist in it, 'constitute it what it is,' seeing the property of having three sides is common to all triangles, and not peculiar to the rectangular,—and that the rectangular triangle 'is constituted what it is,' not by this common property, but by those very peculiar properties which are alleged not to exist in it, but to be merely relative to a certain capacity of our minds. Were this not the case, then there might exist, or be imagined, a right-angled triangle without those properties: that is, but for the 'peculiar capacity of the comparing mind,' there might be a right-angled triangle, of which the three angles were not equal to two right angles. To my mind it appears, that the comparison is all *against* the theory; and that, as this distinguishing property is essential to the very nature of a right-angled triangle, so is there something essential in the nature of moral rectitude, in the distinctions of right and wrong. Nor am I able to conceive what it is for an agent to be virtuous or vicious, if there be no abstract principles of virtue and vice, in conformity to which the character of the agent consists."

I might have satisfied myself with simply leaving out this passage, so that no reader of the second edition might have known of its existence. I reckon it, however, the duty of an author, when he discovers that, in censuring the statements of another, his own are in fault, ingenuously to acknowledge it. Now, not only have I fallen into the unaccountable inadvertency of writing, instead of the property of the square of the hypothenuse being equal to the squares of the other two sides, which is truly distinctive of the rectangular triangle, the property of the equality of the three angles to two right angles, which is not distinctive of any one triangle, but common to all; — this might easily have been rectified: — but there is a fallacy in the objection to Dr. Brown's statement, of which, on reconsideration, I am sensible. The Doctor, indeed, has himself in part led me into it, by speaking of the *three sides* of the rectangular triangle as "*constituting it what it is;*" inasmuch as it is not by the three sides, which all triangles have, but by the relative position of the sides to one another, or by the one circumstance (from which it has its name) of its having in it *a right angle*, that it is distinguished from other triangles, and so constituted what it is. But in saying this, I have stated my own error as well as his. The property, that the square of the hypothenuse is equal to the squares of the other two sides, is not the property which constitutes the rectangular triangle what it is. Such a triangle is constituted what it is, by the simple fact of two of its three sides being at right angles to each other, and would have continued what it is forever, by this relative position of its sides, although the property of the equality of the one and the two squares had never been discovered; — although the "comparing mind" had never thought of or demonstrated such a problem.

While I acknowledge this inadvertency, and, on account of it, have expunged the passage, the admission, let it be understood, is not one which at all effects the conclusiveness of my reasoning. To say, as Dr. Brown does, that the property in question is "the *result* of a peculiar capacity of the comparing mind," is to say that the property had no existence previously to its discovery by the comparing mind. But if this were true, it is not easy to imagine how it could ever have been discovered. It was, most assuredly, a truth antecedently to the discovery of it — (may we not even say, on abstract principles, an eternal truth?) — that in a right-angled triangle, the square of the one side was equal to the squares of the other two.

Had it not been previously true, no comparing mind could ever have found it out; and though no comparing mind had ever found it out, it would not on that account have been the less true. I speak with diffidence; but I cannot but consider Dr. Brown, acute metaphysician as he was, as most strangely misled, in the whole passage where this comparison occurs, by the influence of predilection for a theory. "It is man, he says, "or some thinking being like man, whose comparison gives birth to the feeling that is termed by us a discovery of the equality of the square of one of the sides to the squares of the other two!" A *feeling* is to be understood as synonymous with a *notion;* for he afterwards speaks of the "feelings excited in the contemplating mind," as being "*notions* of equality and proportion." Now it seems reasonable to think, that the thing of which the contemplating mind obtains the notion, must have had existence before the notion of it was obtained; else the notion must have been a notion of nothing. That which is discovered, and the discovery of it are surely not the same thing. We call the thing discovered, *a discovery;* but we do not mean by this, that it is a mere *feeling* or *notion in the mind*, and has no truth and no existence out of the mind and independently of it. The *discovery*, in the present case, is to be found in the *demonstrated problem;* and, on the assumption of the correctness of the demonstration, it stands a truth, independently of the feeling of any particular mind, or of all minds. "If the feeling of the relation never had arisen, and never were to arise, in any mind, though the squares themselves might still exist as separate figures, *their equality would be nothing.*" Nothing! Would it not be "*their equality?*" and what else is there in question? Would it not have been true, that the one square was equal to the other two squares, if no mind had ever perceived the equality? Is not the affirmation that unless the relation had been perceived by some "comparing mind," the "equality would have been nothing," equivalent to the affirmation that there really was nothing for the comparing mind to perceive?

The proposition, that the square of the hypothenuse is equal to the squares of the other two sides, is a proposition which does not surely express a relation between the figure of a right-angled triangle and the comparing mind, but a relation between the component sides of such a triangle to each other:—and if this relation did not subsist previously to the comparing mind's discovering it, I am at a loss to know what there was for the comparing mind to discover; how,

consequently, the discovery could have been made; or (which, according to Dr. Brown, is the same thing,) how the feeling of the relation could ever, in any mind, have arisen. "Certain geometrical figures cannot be contemplated by us, without exciting certain feelings of the contemplating mind — which are notions of equality or proportion. Is it necessary that the equality should be itself something existing in the separate figures themselves, without reference to any mind that contemplates them, before we put any confidence in geometry? Or is it not enough, that every mind which does contemplate them together is impressed with that particular feeling in consequence of which they are ranked as equal?" But these, I would say, with all due deference, are not questions in point. The proper question is, *How comes it*, that certain geometrical figures cannot be contemplated by us without exciting notions of equality and proportion? Can this arise from any other cause than that the equality and proportion do actually belong, as properties, to the figures themselves? Suppose it were granted that it is *not* necessary to our "putting confidence in geometry," that "the equality should be itself something existing in the separate figures themselves;" still we must affirm, this existence of the equality in the figures themselves *is* necessary to account for the fact, that "every mind that does contemplate them together is impressed with that particular feeling, in consequence of which they are ranked as equal" — that is, is impressed with the notion of their equality. — But is it a fact that every contemplating mind is so impressed?

The proposition, that "in every right-angled triangle the square of the hypothenuse is equal to the squares of the other sides," is certainly not a proposition whose truth is self-evident. And if the relation which it expresses be not a relation existing in the figure itself, but a relation only between the figure and the perceiving mind, and which has no subsistence except as so perceived, then how is the truth of the demonstration in the 37th proposition of the first Book of Euclid to be ascertained? Is it by the numerical proportion of minds in which the "feeling is excited," or the notion produced, of equality? If the "equality be nothing" except as perceived, and the relation be one that is only in the mind, — then in regard to every mind that cannot follow the geometrical demonstration, and perceive the *quod erat demonstrandum*, the relation expressed in the proposition is not merely an *existing* relation *not perceived*, but it is a relation which has *no existence*. And, although the non-existence

of it in one mind cannot disprove the existence of it in another, yet the mind in which the notion of the relation does not arise, or the feeling of it is not excited, has the very same evidence of its non-existence, as the mind in which the notion does arise has of its existence. The bearing of this discussion on the important subject of morals, I must leave the reader to gather from the argument in the text with which it stands connected. Dr. Brown's object is to show that, as equality and proportions are not relations subsisting in geometrical figures themselves, but are mere relations between the figures and certain feelings or notions of the comparing mind; so right and wrong are nothing in themselves, or "existing in individual agents," but merely relations between certain actions and courses of action, and certain mental emotions. If he fails in establishing the one, he equally fails in the other. I still think, that the illustrative comparison is a very unfortunate one, and "all *against* the theory."

NOTE G. Page 98.

In the observations here made in justice to Mr. Hume's theory, I have proceeded on the assumption (page 95,) that "in the whole discussion it ought to be previously understood, that, when we treat of *virtue*, we treat of what relates to the feelings and actions of *living, conscious, voluntary agents.*" On this it has been said:— "It is obvious to ask in reply, *Why* ought it to be understood and assumed, that virtue relates exclusively to the actions of voluntary agents? Why ought it to be understood, that our ideas of virtue are restricted to one department of nature? No reason can be assigned on the theory of utility. On that theory, the assumption is arbitrary; for, if utility is of the essence of virtue,— if usefulness is that which constitutes virtue, then there is no reason why virtue should be limited to one department of nature, any more than usefulness which constitutes it what it is. The absence of voluntary choice might deprive us of a virtuous *agent*, but not of a virtuous *effect*. In short, on the theory of utility, virtue ought to inhere in an *effect*, irrespective of moral agency or voluntary choice. * * * * The great objection to the theory of utility is, that it makes virtue

nothing irrespective of its effects; that it makes its nature, its essence, and its excellence, dependent on its effects, instead of making its tendencies and effects result from its nature." — *Christian Journal for February*, 1834. *Rev. of Christian Ethics.*

This is ingenious and plausible; but I still think fallacious. In answer to the questions, "*Why* ought it to be understood and assumed, that virtue relates exclusively to the actions of voluntary agents? Why ought it to be understood that our ideas of virtue are restricted to one department of nature?" I would answer — for the very same reason for which we distinguish, and treat distinctly, the various departments or kingdoms of the physical creation. We consider *virtue* as belonging to the intelligent and rational creation, or in one word, to *mind*, as naturally and confidently as we consider *extension*, *figure*, *impenetrability*, to belong to the physical and material creation, or in one word, to *matter*. Virtue, it appears to me, pertains as exclusively to the mental department, as the qualities enumerated pertain to the material. If, because virtue consists in utility, it followed that whatever is useful has in it the essence of virtue, — this sequence would appear to me the same as the sequence, that whatever is useful in the department of matter must have in it what belongs exclusively to the department of mind, — nay, must *be* that which can have no existence but in mind. Now, would not this be about as reasonable as to say, that whatever is useful in any one of the subdivisions of physical nature may be fairly predicated to *be* whatever you will that is useful in another?

It may perhaps be answered, that there is a difference between a thing's *being useful* and its *consisting essentially* in its usefulness. The latter being the position, does it not, it may be said, clearly follow, that whatever is useful possesses that in which virtue *essentially consists*? which amounts to the same thing as its having in it the essence of virtue? The whole of this, however, seems to me to turn upon the inadvertency of speaking of a *virtuous action*, as if such an action could subsist independently of a *virtuous agent*. But there can be no such thing. (*See Christian Ethics, Introd. to Lect.* II.) Even upon the system of utility, an action, I apprehend, may be a *useful* action without being a *virtuous* action. Every action must be the action of an agent. There can be no virtue in an action, except as the action of an agent. If, therefore, there can be no virtue in an action but as the action of an agent, must not the virtue of the action, so considered, properly consist, not

in the actual utility or beneficial effect, but in the agent's *regard to that utility*? in the action's being done *with a view* to that beneficial effect? The quality of *virtue* lies not properly in the *action* but in the *agent;* and when we speak of a virtuous action, we invariably have respect to the state of the agent's mind in the doing of it. So that the utility, on account of which (according to this theory) we approve an action as virtuous, must be the utility *in the intention of the agent.* When evil results from an action, we do not on that account pronounce it vicious, if we are assured that so far from the evil having been contemplated by the agent, he intended the very opposite good; and when good is the result of an action, neither do we on that account pronounce it virtuous, if we know that the agent meant it for evil.

These statements seem to me in harmony with every fair and candid view of the utilitarian theory. And if so, they sufficiently show that virtue, in its own proper department, might consist in utility, without the sequence following, that utility in every other department must constitute virtue. "The absence of voluntary choice," says the reviewer, "might deprive us of a virtuous agent, but not of a virtuous effect." On the principles laid down, there can be no such thing as a "*virtuous effect.*" Nay, the effect may even be that which constitutes the action virtuous, and yet have no virtue *in itself;* nor does the virtue even of the action lie simply in its producing the effect, but, considered as the action of a virtuous agent, (the only rational sense in which it can be called a virtuous action) its virtue lies, as has been said, in the effect as contemplated and intended by the agent. I do not at present see it to be at all a fair conclusion against the utilitarian system, (though I reject it on other grounds,) that it makes virtue "inhere in its effects." The virtue must be sought in the agent who does the action, and it is the virtue in the agent that imparts virtue to his action; the action cannot be taken apart from the agent, and possess virtue in itself; still less can there be virtue in the effect resulting from the action, considered in itself,—that is, abstractedly from the intention of the agent. The fundamental principle of the utilitarian theory, as stated, (page 98,) seems to me to be, "that in the actions of voluntary agents, (in which alone any moral principle, whether good or evil, is to be sought,) the virtue consists in the good or benefit to which, in the purpose of the agent they tend." While I cannot, on the grounds stated in the Lectures, approve of the system, I would not do it injustice, by imputing to it consequences which are not legitimate.

NOTE H. Page 118.

The defect in Butler here complained of is in part supplied by the following amplification of the illustrative case selected by the Bishop. The citation is from Dr. Chalmers' Bridgewater Treatise, Part I. chap. i. pp. 64—67. "Here it is of capital importance to distinguish between an original and proper tendency, and a subsequent aberration. This has been well illustrated by the regulator of a watch, whose office and primary design, and that obviously announced by the relation in which it stands to the other parts of the machinery, is to control the velocity of its movements. And we should still perceive this to have been its destination, even though, by accident or decay, it had lost the power of command which at the first belonged to it. We should not misunderstand the purpose of its maker, although in virtue of some deterioration or derangement which the machinery had undergone, that purpose were now frustrated. And we could discern the purpose in the very make and constitution of the mechanism. We might even see it to be an irregular watch; and yet this need not prevent us from seeing, that, at its original fabrication, it was made for the purpose of moving regularly. The mere existence and position of the regulator might suffice to indicate this; although it had become powerless, either from the wearing of the parts or from some extrinsic disturbance to which the instrument had been exposed. The regulator, in this instance, may be said to have the right, though not the power, of command over the movements of the time-piece; yet the loss of the power has not obliterated the vestiges of the right; so that, by the inspection of the machinery alone, we both learn the injury that has been done to it, and the condition in which it originally came from the hand of its maker—a condition of actual as well as rightful supremacy, on the part of the regulator, over all its movements. And a similar discovery may be made, by examination of the various parts and principles which make up the moral system of man; for we see various parts and principles there. We see ambition, having power for its object, and without the attainment of which it is not satisfied; and avarice, having wealth for its object, without the attainment of which it is not satisfied; and benevolence, having for its object the good of others, without the attainment of which it is not satisfied; and the love of reputation, having for its object their applause, without which it is not satisfied; and lastly, to proceed no

further in the enumeration, conscience, which surveys and superintends the whole man, and whose distinct and appropriate object is to have the entire control both of its inward desires and of its outward doings; and without the attainment of this it is thwarted from its proper aim, and remains unsatisfied. Each appetite or affection of our nature hath its own distinct object; but this last is the object of conscience, which may be termed the moral affection. The place which it occupies, or rather which it is felt that it should occupy, and which naturally belongs to it, is that of a governor, claiming the superiority, and taking to itself the direction over all the other powers and passions of humanity. If this superiority be denied to it, there is a felt violence done to the whole economy of man. The sentiment is, that the spring is not as it should be; and even after conscience is forced, in virtue of some subsequent derangement, from this station of rightful ascendency, we can still distinguish between what is the primitive design or tendency, and what is the posterior aberration. We can perceive, in the case of a deranged or distempered watch, that the mechanism is out of order; but even then, on the bare examination of its workmanship, and more especially from the place and bearing of its regulator, can we pronounce that it was made for moving regularly. And in like manner, on the bare inspection of our mental economy alone, and more particularly from the place which consicence has there, can we, even in the case of the man who refuses to obey its dictates, affirm that he was made for walking conscientiously."

The general truth of this representation, I am far from being disposed to question; nor is it at all inconsistent with any of my statements. My object is to show, that conscience is not to be depended upon as an *infallible standard* of right and wrong. Dr. Chalmers says, (page 91,) "In every case, where the moral sense is unfettered by these associations," (various perverting influences which he had enumerated,) "and the judgment is uncramped, either by the partialities of interest, or by the inveteracy of national customs which habit and antiquity have rendered sacred, conscience is found to speak the same language, nor to the remotest ends of the world, is there a country or an island, where the same uniform and consistent voice is not heard from her. Let the mists of ignorance and passion, and artificial education be only cleared away; and the moral attributes of goodness and righteousness and truth be seen undistorted and in their own proper guise; and there is not a heart or a con-

science throughout earth's teeming population, which would refuse to do them homage. And it is precisely because the Father of the human family has given such hearts and conscience to all his children, that we infer these to be the very sanctities of the Godhead, the very attributes of his own primeval nature."—But to what more does this amount, than that, if all biasing and perverting influences were withdrawn, and men were fully and universally under the dominance of knowledge and right affections, conscience would operate rightly and uniformly. This is confirmatory of my positions, not against them.

NOTE I. Page 163.

"Sir James Mackintosh," says Dr. Chalmers, "tells us of the generation of human conscience; and not merely states, but endeavors to explain, the phenomenon of its felt supremacy within us."—*Bridgw. Treat.* p. 60. Conscience is not regarded by Sir James as either *original* or *uncompounded.*—He speaks of it as "the *acquired*, perhaps, but *universally and necessarily acquired* faculty of conscience."—*Prelim. Diss.* p. 368. And although in this sentence he seems to speak hesitatingly, the "*perhaps*" only expresses the modesty of the philosopher in differing from others, not a feeling of scepticism as to the validity of his own theory; for, in introducing his remarks on the composition or generation of conscience, he speaks of the principle of it as "a most important consideration, which had escaped Hartley, as well as every other philosopher."—In explaining how conscience is acquired, he shows at the same time that he considered it not as *simple*, but *compounded.* "The language of all mankind," says he, "implies that the moral faculty, whatever it may be, and from what origin soever it may spring, is intelligibly and properly spoken of as one."—But though thus properly spoken of as one, it is not, according to him, because it is originally one. "It is as common," he adds, "in mind as in matter, for a compound to have properties not to be found in any of its constituent parts:"—"originally separate feelings may be so perfectly blended by a process performed in every mind, that they can no longer be disjoined from each other, but must always co-

operate, and thus reach the only union which we can conceive."—P. 268.

The next question, therefore, is, what is the composition of this moral faculty? what are its constituent elementary principles?—"The truth seems to be, that the moral sentiments in their mature state, are *a class of feelings which have no other object but the mental dispositions leading to voluntary action, and the voluntary actions which flow from these dispositions.* We are pleased with some dispositions and actions, and displeased with others, in ourselves and our fellows. We desire to cultivate the dispositions, and to perform the actions, which we contemplate with satisfaction. These objects, like all those of human appetite or desire, are sought for their own sakes."—P. 346. "The sentiment of moral approbation, formed by association out of antecedent affections, may become so perfectly independent of them, that we are no longer conscious of the means by which it was formed, and never can in practice repeat, though we may in theory perceive, the process by which it was generated. It is in that mature and sound state of our nature, that our emotions at the view of *right* and *wrong* are ascribed to *conscience.*"—P. 368.

In one view of it, this theory seems to bear a pretty close affinity to that of Dr. Brown,—namely, in that it finds the origin of our moral judgments in certain *feelings* or *emotions.* "We are pleased with some dispositions and actions, and displeased with others, in ourselves and our fellows." This pleasure and displeasure are thus imputed to certain primary principles of our constitution, even the elementary feelings which are conceived to enter into the ultimate composition of conscience. *Why* we are thus pleased or displeased, it does not, so far as I observe, form any part of the theory to explain. We are so constituted. This class of feelings have their appropriate objects and sources of gratification, like all the other natural appetites and desires. Their distinguishing peculiarity is, that "their gratification *requires the use of no means.*" "Nothing stands between the moral sentiments and their object. They are, as it were, in contact with the will." They are the only description of desires and aversions of which "volitions and actions are themselves the end, or last object in view." Still they are primary feelings, seated in our constitution, and by the laws of that constitution associated with certain emotions, according as the objects with which they come into contact are agreeable or disagreeable, in harmony or in dissonance with

them. — This bears a close analogy to Dr. Brown's theory of primary and constitutional *emotions* of approbation and disapprobation, which are with him the grounds of our moral judgments. — Sir James speaks of conscience, accordingly, as being "made up of emotions," — and of a "fitness to excite approbation as a relation of objects to our susceptibility." — P. 393. I would speak with diffidence; but there does appear to me some confusion of ideas in the representation given of conscience in the passage where this phraseology occurs: — "That the main, if not sole, object of conscience is to govern our voluntary exertions, is manifest. But how could it perform this great function, if it did not impel the will? and how could it have the latter effect as a mere act of reason, or indeed in any respect otherwise than as it is made up of emotions, by which alone its grand aim could in any degree be attained?" — P. 193.

Is there no difference, then, between *governing* and *impelling*? or is it necessary that the impelling and the governing power be the same? Are the regulator and the main-spring in a watch the same? The latter impels, the former governs. That a power should *impel* which is "made up of emotion," is certainly very conceivable; but I can hardly imagine anything more unfit for *governing*. The emotions of which the power is supposed to be made up come more appropriately, I should think, among the things to be controlled and governed. And surely a principle into which *judgment* and *reason* enter is much better adapted for the exercise of *rule* and *government*, than one that is "made up of emotions." The affections and dispositions are the immediate impulses to volition and action. It is the province, or part of the province, of conscience, to control and regulate these very impulses; — and instead of speaking of it as made up of *emotions*, were I to represent it as made up of anything, it should be rather of *convictions*, or decisions of the judgment with regard to right and wrong. Not that I would exclude from the import of the term the *emotions*, of pleasure on the one hand, and pian on the other, produced by the testimony of conscience that we have done right, or that we have done wrong. But these are emotions of quite a different nature from those of which Sir James insists that conscience must be made up, in order to fit it for "governing our actions" by "impelling our will." They are emotions *subsequent* to both the volition and the action.

NOTE K. Page 172.

In the text, I have represented Paul as being far from pleading conscientiousness as a palliation of his guilt in persecuting the church and cause of Jesus of Nazareth. To this statement his own words in 1 Tim. i. 12, 13; may perhaps be considered as opposed: — "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly, in unbelief." But, as the object of the Apostle in the whole passage is, to magnify his own sinfulness and the consequently abundant grace of Christ manifested in his salvation and apostleship, it does not *à priori*, seem likely that he would introduce considerations palliative of the former, and, by necessary consequence, calculated to reduce, rather than to enhance, the estimate of the latter. On this account, as well as on other grounds, I am inclined to agree with those who would throw the words — "but I obtained mercy," — into a parenthesis; and then the clause which follows — "for I acted ignorantly in unbelief" — will not, as at present, express the reason why mercy was obtained by him, or rather was not withheld from him, but will only *account for his conduct* as a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious. The verse will stand thus: — *Τὸν πρότερον ὄντα βλάσφημον καὶ διώκτην, καὶ ὑβριστήν, (ἀλλ' ἠλεήθην) ὅτι ἀγνοῶν ἐποίησα, ἐν ἀπιστίᾳ.* — "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious, (but I obtained mercy) for I acted ignorantly in unbelief: and the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant," &c. — Such a construction of the words is very consistent both with the writer's spirit and style. But for a full and lucid statement of the grounds on which this reading is to be preferred, I would refer my readers to an excellent little Tract on Assurance and Pardon, by the Rev. David Russell, of Dundee.

NOTE L. Page 173.

I have as yet met with nothing that has tended to alter, or materially to modify, the views I have here and elsewhere given of the

nature of *conscience*, as consisting in the exercise of the judgment in regard to human conduct and its principles, combined with the susceptibility of certain emotions; the emotions not determining the judgment, but arising from its decisions.

The work of Dr. Abercrombie, on "The Philosophy of the Moral Feelings," I read when these Lectures were nearly finished at press; not, therefore, in time to admit of my making reference to it. The two volumes of that highly esteemed friend, on the philosophy of the intellectual powers and the moral feelings, I regard as exceedingly valuable, being the production of a man equally distinguished for professional eminence and Christian excellence, replete with interesting facts, as well as enlightened disquisition, and admirably adapted for counteracting the prevailing tendencies in the minds of youthful physiologists to materialism and infidelity, and for recommending to consideration and acceptance those peculiar discoveries of revelation, the profession of which he, at the same time, adorns by his consistent example. With a great deal of what he says on the subject of conscience, I perfectly concur. I cannot but think, however, that on the one point of its identity with judgment in the actual process of the mind, an analysis of his own expressions may go far to satisfy him that there is no ground for the distinction between them. "We appeal," he says, "to the consciousness of every man, that he perceives a power, which, in particular cases, warns him of the conduct which he ought to pursue, and administers a solemn admonition when he has departed from it. For, while his judgment conveys to him a certain impression both of the qualities and the tendencies of actions, he has, besides this, a feeling by which he views the actions with approbation or disapprobation, in reference purely to their moral aspect, and without any regard to their consequences." — *Phil. of the Moral Feelings*, p. 142.

Now, what is it that is here assigned to *judgment*? "It conveys to him a certain impression both of the *qualities* and *tendencies* of actions." I wish to know what is precisely meant by the *qualities* of actions, as thus distinguished from their *tendencies*. Am I to understand by the term, their *moral* qualities, — their distinctive characters as *right* or *wrong*? If so, then the judgment is represented as conveying an impression of these qualities, distinctly from, and independently of, their tendencies. When to this, it is subjoined, — "he has, *besides this*, a feeling by which he views the

actions with approbation or disapprobation, in reference purely to their *moral aspect*, and without regard to consequences,"— what is the precise amount of addition to the previous statement? In the latter part of the sentence, do not the terms "*moral aspect*," and "*consequences*" correspond to what, in the former part of it, are expressed by "*qualities*" and "*tendencies?*" If so, then, if an impression of the *qualities* of an action is conveyed by the judgment, is not an impression of its *moral aspect* conveyed by the judgment? And does not this amount to the same thing, with an impression of it as *right* or *wrong* being conveyed by the judgment? Is there, then, any material difference between the *impression of an action as right*, and the sentiment of *approbation*, or between the *impression of an action as wrong*, and the sentiment of *disapprobation?* If there be, I cannot discern it. The sentiment of approbation, be it remembered, is something very distinct from the *consent of the heart and will.* Conscience may approve, while the affections and desires rebel. Were it otherwise, there could never be a dictate of conscience without the concurrence of the heart, and the consequent correspondence of the volition and the action; which would be the same thing as to say there could be no such thing as the pain of guilt, or indeed, as guilt itself. It appears to me, that the impression of an action as right—morally right, is approbation; not merely that it gives rise to approbation, but that it *is* approbation. Dr. Abercrombie afterwards adds, (page 143) "The province of conscience, then, appears to be, to convey to man a certain conviction of what is morally right and wrong, in regard to conduct in individual cases, and the general exercise of the desires and affections." But is there any essential difference between the province of *conscience*, as thus defined, and the province of *judgment*, as defined in the terms already cited?—any essential difference between "conveying to man a certain conviction of what is morally right and wrong in conduct," and "conveying to him a certain impression of the qualities of actions."

All this, however, depends, I am aware, on what the Dr. means by "the *qualities* of actions." I have been assuming him to mean their *moral* qualities; because it is about these alone that there is any argument; and indeed, when human actions are the subject, what qualities are there besides their moral qualities that are deserving of controversy? If, however, Dr. A. refers, when he speaks of judgment, to the *physical* qualities of actions, my reasoning, I readily

acknowledge, is baseless. But then, I should at once deny the correctness of confining the exercise of judgment respecting actions, exclusively to physical properties: and in this, I think, I should carry the majority of judgments along with me. Yet that physical qualities are intended, I have been led to suspect by the terms of a subsequent statement. In speaking, (page 147,) of a particular disordered state of the affections and moral principles, "while there is no derangement in the ordinary exercise of judgment," he says, — "There is no diminution of his sound estimate of physical relations, — for this is the province of reason. But there is a total derangement of his sense and approbation of moral relations, — for this is conscience." Are the "*moral relations*," then, to be excluded from the proper province of reason? and is that province to be confined to "*physical relations*" only? I confess myself, indeed, at a loss for a definite idea of the application of reason to the physical relations of actions. What are those physical relations? and what is there in them about which to reason? The Apostle Paul, (to whose statements Dr. A. refers,) speaks of men's "consciences bearing witness," and of their "*reasonings between one another* (μεταξὺ ἀλλήλων τῶν λογισμῶν) accusing or vindicating;" but when he so speaks, both the testimony and the reasonings relate to the *moral* qualities of actions. I submit these few observations, with all diffidence, to the consideration of Dr. Abercrombie's own mind.

There is another point and one of still greater importance, on which I am reluctantly constrained to differ from him. In the account which he gives of conscience, as the presiding and regulating power in the moral constitution of man, it does not appear to me, that there is a correct impression of the degree in which that faculty, (call it what you will,) has been affected by the entrance of sin. One would be tempted to think that it is regarded as having escaped the general depravation, and as still sitting the uncorrupted censor of all the other powers and passions of the soul. But this, surely, is a great mistake. In evidence of this, I make my appeal, at once and without reserve, to the first and highest of all principles. Believing, as I do, the *love of God* to be the fundamental principle of all morals, I have simply to ask Dr. Abercrombie how conscience stands affected in relation to it? Is there amongst mankind any thing at all approaching to a due sensibility of the evil involved in the absence or the deficiency of this principle? How is it abroad?

how is it at home? Without adverting to the fearful aberrations from all right conceptions of the true God among the heathen, and the moral origin of such aberrations,—I now ask, how the fact is, when the character and claims of this true God are brought before them? Is it easy to procure a concession of the claims, or to produce a penitential sense of the evil of having violated them, and an adequate impression of their paramount imperativeness? And at home, — where lies the grand difficulty with the teachers of Christianity, — with the inculcators of the high and authoritative morality of the word of God? Where, but in the sluggish inertness, the callous unimpressibleness, of the conscience, in regard to this first principle of moral obligation? How little is it at all thought of in the estimate of character! how superlatively difficult to procure for it its proper place, — to prevail with men to admit, I say not its absolute supremacy, but even its indispensable necessity! How comes it, that conscience has not, all along and everywhere, with authoritative and effective voice, said to men, — "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul?" How comes it, that it has not, all along and everywhere, condemned the absence of this love as the most flagrant and deeply criminal of all the breaches of moral obligation? Has this been like the operation of an unfallen principle? It is *here*, on the contrary, that its grand failure lies, in the very department where lies the essence of human corruption.

There are passages in Dr. Abercrombie's work, which contain most correct and Scriptural statements of the tendencies of human nature. My only wonder is, that, with the views which these passages unfold, he should hold conscience, in fallen man, quite so high as he does, as an authoritative standard of moral rectitude. When treating, and treating admirably well, of the moral influence of the great truths relative to the perfections of Deity; and of the incumbent duty of a "careful direction of the mind to such truths, so as to enable them to act as moral causes in the mental economy;" causes, "from which," he shows, "by the established order of moral sequences, the emotions naturally follow;" and from the emotions, cherished with satisfaction and reverence, a corresponding influence upon the heart and character," the excellent author writes as follows: — "But the first step in this important process may be neglected; the mind may not be directed with due care to the truths which thus claim its highest regard, — and the natural result is a

corresponding deficiency in the emotions and conduct which ought to flow from them. This will be the case in a still higher degree, if there has been formed any actual derangement of the moral condition; if deeds have been committed, or even desires cherished, by which the indications of conscience have been violated. The moral harmony of the mind is then lost; and, however slight may be the first impression, a morbid influence has begun to operate in the mental economy, which tends gradually to gain strength, until it becomes a ruling principle in the whole character. The truths connected with the divine perfections are now neither invited nor cherished, but are felt to be intruders which disturb the mental tranquillity. The attention ceases to be directed to them, and the corresponding emotions vanish from the mind. Such appears to be the moral history of those who, in the striking language of the sacred writings, 'do not like to retain God in their knowledge.'

When the moral harmony of the mind has been impaired to this extent, another mental condition arises, according to the wondrous system of moral sequences. This consists in a distortion of the understanding itself, regarding the first great principles of moral truth. For, a fearless contemplation of the truth, respecting the divine perfections, having become inconsistent with the moral condition of the mind, there next arises a desire to discover a view of them more in accordance with its own feelings. This is followed, in due course, by a corresponding train of its own speculations; and these, by a mind so prepared, are received as truth. The inventions of the mind itself thus become the regulating principles of its emotions; and this mental process, advancing from step to step, terminates in moral degradation and anarchy."— pp. 159, 160.

I have here only to ask two simple questions. In the first place, When the Apostle, in the words quoted, says, "They did not like to retain God in their knowledge," does he not describe the *generic character* of mankind? and in the mental process of degeneracy which the above paragraphs so well delineate, is there not contained the "moral history," not merely of individuals here and there, rare and extraordinary exceptions, but of the species, of the entire race; although doubtless, in a country where revelation is enjoyed, and where by many minds the knowledge which it communicates is possessed, while the heart remains estranged from its moral influence, and may even for a time appear to exert a salutary restraining energy, such as temptation, may gradually weaken and destroy, — exemplifications of

the melancholy tendency downward may be expected of a peculiarly striking character? And, secondly, If there are in human nature such tendencies, — tendencies to such disregard and forgetfulness of the great truths of God, as to banish from the mind the emotion they are fitted to engender, and even to produce a distortion of the understanding itself respecting these great truths, and a desire after views of them in accordance with the heart's own perverted feelings; — if, I say, these things be indeed so, — how can we place anything like implicit reliance on conscience, as an infallible standard of right and wrong?

In the *Eclectic Review for January*, 1834, there is an article on the "Christian Ethics," with the general strain of which I have every reason to be more than satisfied. I forbear of course all laudatory epithets, lest I should expose myself to the sarcastic application of the poet's lines —

> "For 't is a rule that ever will hold true,
> Grant me discernment, and I grant it you."

On the subject of conscience, the reviewer, who dissents from my opinion, thus exppesses himself: — "Nor can we approve of his definition of conscience, as the mere 'exercise of the judgment in the department of morals.' The objection urged by Dr. Payne against this definition is, we must think, unanswerable: — 'My judgment pronounces the conduct of a friend to be wrong; but it cannot be said that my conscience condemns him.'" I should have been glad, had the respected critic pointed out to me the fallacy of the answer which I have attempted to give to this objection. He has not done this; and as I am not myself sensible of any fallacy, the objection, "I must think," is *not* unanswerable. When Dr. Payne says, "My judgment pronounces the conduct of a friend to be wrong," he seems to me to concede the general point, that the discernment between the right and wrong of actions *pertains to the judgment;* and, if it pertains to the judgment in regard to the actions of others, why should there be required another faculty for such discernment in regard to our own? I am unable to perceive any flaw in the conclusion I have drawn from this admission: — "If conscience, indeed, is at all to be considered as including in its appropriate function the determination of right and wrong, — then it seems to me to be a self-evident truth, that the same faculty of mind which pronounces the sentence of right or wrong on the actions of others, must necessarily be that which which pronounces similar sentence upon our own.

If it be judgment in the one case, it must be judgment in the other; the sentence not depending on the person by whom the action is done, but on the nature of the action itself."

According to the reviewer, conscience, whether in unfallen or fallen creatures, is simply the "*consciousness of moral accountableness.*" "Remorse," says he, "differs from conscience, in being a consciousness not merely of responsibility, but of guilt. A tender conscience, that is, a deep and vivid sense of accountableness to God, may consist with a very erroneous because ill-informed judgment as to right and wrong. Surely, then, conscience cannot be identical with judgment; cannot consist in it. In other words, conscience is not the mind judging of the right or wrong of our own actions, but is the mind knowing and considering, that, for choosing and doing the right or the wrong, we are accountable to the Author of our being. In a holy being, this sense of accountableness, connected with conscious rectitude, and the enjoyment of the divine favor, must be an element of perfect happiness. In a sinful being, "it is that which makes conscious guilt a source of torment."

On this statement I beg leave, with due submission, to offer the following suggestions. *First*, it contains a distinct admission, that the discrimination of the right and the wrong in human actions belongs to the province of *judgment*. If, therefore, I am in error, my error regards not the actual mental process, but the mere question of nomenclature, whether such discrimination should or should not be included among the functions expressed by the term *conscience*. *Secondly*, Neither, according to this definition, does conscience include at all the sensibility to emotions, pleasurable or painful, when good or evil has been done; for "remorse differs from conscience, in being a consciousness not merely of responsibility, but of guilt," This (to apply the critic's own terms in regard to my incidental and I think justifiable use of a particular term) — this is "a very unusual, and (we submit) inaccurate use of the word." Remorse, assuredly, is not the mere "*consciousness* of guilt." It is, as Dr. Payne expresses it, "the dreadful feeling of regret and self-condemnation, which arises upon the retrospect of our guilt;" or, as Dr. Johnson has it, in the shortest possible form, "*pain of guilt.*" According to the critic's definition, then, conscience neither includes the judicial decision on the right and wrong of actions, nor the susceptibility of consequent emotions; the one, or the other, or both of which have generally (as far as I am aware universally) been con-

sidered as belonging to its proper province. *Thirdly*, If conscience be simply the "consciousness of accountableness," it is indeed perfectly true that "a tender conscience, that is, a deep and vivid sense of accountableness to God, may consist with a very erroneous because ill-informed judgment as to right and wrong;" but then, this is giving up conscience altogether as a standard or criterion of right and wrong. It is no longer a *law*, nor a *regulator*, nor an *inward monitor*. If it "bears witness," as Paul affiims it does, it is only to man's responsibility, not at all to the moral qualities of the actions for which he is responsible. On these it is the *judgment* that decides; and the office of conscience is only to make the agent sensible of accountableness for what that faculty pronounces right or wrong. In as far, then, as conscience is concerned, what becomes of man's being "a law unto himself?" It is judgment alone that makes him so; inasmuch as conscience, even in its "best estate," — a "tender conscience," — a "deep and vivid sense of accountableness to God," may subsist and be in exercise, and yet leave the subject of it "very ill-informed as to the law of right and wrong." *Fourthly*, To me, I confess, it appears, that even that which by the critic is assigned to conscience, as its peculiar and distinctive function, must be regarded as an intellectual operation of the mind, or an exercise of the judgment. "Conscience," says he, "is not the mind judging of the right or wrong of our own actions, but is the mind knowing and considering that for choosing or doing the right or the wrong, we are accountable to the Author of our being." — "*Knowing*" is a mental exercise or state purely intellectual. "*Considering*" is an operation of the judging faculty; for, although it may sometimes express simple attention, yet in the *connection* in which it here stands, it clearly involves our applying the idea of accountableness to our conduct, and forming a judgment of the influence which it ought to have upon it, and of the consequences resulting from our acting in conformity with that influence, or in opposition to it. Were the accountableness, which in the discharge of the proper functions of conscience, the mind is represented as "knowing and considering," made the subject of question, to what faculty but to the judgment should we make our appeal, in order to produce, to restore, or to impress the conviction of it? I must still, then, consider conscience as *the judgment of right and wrong*, associated with *the susceptibility of corresponding emotions* of pleasure or

pain when right or wrong is done by us, — emotions which, I readily admit, arise chiefly from a sense of accountableness.

It gave me pleasure to find *one* reviewer at least concurring with me in identifying conscience with judgment. I refer to the *British Critic:* — "We have much satisfaction," says the reviewer in that periodical, "in expressing our concurrence in Dr. Wardlaw's notions in regard to conscience, as an exercise of the judgment on our own actions, and as thereby differing from the moral sense of Hutcheson and the original emotions of Dr. Brown." The reviewer objects to even the inclusion of the susceptibility of emotion in our idea of conscience: "Some writers, indeed, have attempted to separate in conscience the power that *determines* from the power which *feels;* ascribing the former to the judgment, and the latter to a special susceptibility connected with our moral discernment. But we should object to this multiplication of original faculties; for, as most of our intellectual operations are accompanied with feelings of pleasure or pain, admiration or disgust, approbation or dislike, we should soon find ourselves reduced to the necessity of creating as many distinct sources of emotion as there are distinguishable acts of the rational energies." — No. XXX. p. 333. But it is not here denied that the susceptibility exists, and actually belongs to the mental process; and if it exists, and is quite of a special nature, the emotion arising from conscious right or wrong being one which is decidedly *unique* in its character, so that there is no danger of confounding it with any other, — then, whether we call it a separate power, — a distinct original faculty, or not, there does not seem to be any sufficiently valid objection to its being included in the function of conscience.

There are two points, on which, though they have no immediate relation to the subject of conscience, I may embrace the present opportunity of offering a few observations, in reply to the censorial strictures of this critic. — The *first* relates to the influence of the depravity of human nature in biasing and perverting the judgment on moral subjects. I am not about to enter into any labored defence of my statements on this point, which stand in my mind altogether unshaken by any of the reviewer's objections. He admits indeed the principle in specific cases, while he appears to question and gainsay its more general application; which I cannot but think rather strange in one who considers conscience as the same with judgment,

and who does not controvert my views of human depravity; seeing all depravity of principle must unavoidably tend to the perversion of the judgment on subjects in which that depravity is concerned. To admit the operation of this principle in specific cases, and at the same time question it in its general application, does not seem very consistent; the specific cases being in fact no more than *exemplifications* of a tendency that must be as universal as the depravity. In allusion to a comparison which I had used, the reviewer says — "It is true that the jaundiced eye could not judge well of colors in any particular case, no more than the opinion of a very bad man could be relied on in any special occurrence where his own passions were concerned." And again, "As to the judgment which a man pronounces upon his own conduct, where there is any ground for doubt, it must be at once acknowledged that no decision could be more fallacious. The judge is prepossessed, and his opinion must go for nothing. In this case the depravity and imperfection which adhere to our nature preclude the possibility of deriving from it a standard of moral rectitude as applicable to practice." — Pp. 326, 327, 319. In these sentences the principle for which I contend is clearly and pointedly admitted in regard to the exercise of the judgment in its decisions on particular cases. Now all that I contend for is its generalization. My position is, that there is the same kind of tendency in the general principles of depravity to exert an undue influence upon the mind in regard to the general principles, obligations, and laws of rectitude, as there is in any particular passion, or any particular feeling of self-interest, to exert such an influence in regard to any particular action or course of conduct. The only question seems to be, whether human nature *be* depraved; whether all mankind, as partakers of that nature, are really the subjects of alienation from God, and of tendencies to evil. If they are, — then, surely, so far as it is so, their opinions and decisions are not to be implicitly trusted to on subjects that interfere with those tendencies.

But the critic argues thus: — "As a man who has never enjoyed the blessing of sight may discuss in a satisfactory manner the origin and relations of colors; and as an individual whose sensibility to flavor has become dead or depraved, may nevertheless be a master in the doctrine of relishes; so many an author produces a good work on the philosophy of ethics, though his conduct and affections be most alien to virtue. In none of these cases is a standard to be

taken from what the persons in question do or feel, but from the conclusions to which they are carried by logical reasoning and legitimate inference." — P. 327.

Now of the statement contained in the last short sentence, I most readily admit the truth. I have nowhere said, that "a standard is to be taken from what such men, or any men, do or feel;" my sole question has been, how far "the conclusions to which they are carried," are not liable to be affected by the general principles and tendencies of a vitiated nature; just as, it is admitted, "the opinions of a bad man" may be affected, "in any special occurrence," by the particular passions which such occurrence brings into play. I am very well aware of the frequent difference between a man's life and his writings; how frequently the latter may be theoretically right, while the former is practically wrong. I am aware, that a man addicted to swearing may indite a good treatise against profaneness; that an intemperate man may write powerfully in favor of sobriety; and that a man of vicious character may be found to reason well on the general principles of morals. But such instances never shake the ascertained principle that a *liking* to a particular evil is apt to affect the judgment regarding it, and to plead in mitigation of the sentence against it — and that general profligacy has the same tendency in regard to general evil. To bring the question to a point. The Apostle Paul says, "the carnal mind is enmity against God." If, in saying so, he gives the character of *human nature*, is there no tendency in this enmity to influence the decision of the judgment respecting the affections and the conduct due to God? Is not the first thing done with every witness that comes into the witness-box, in trials before a human tribunal, to ascertain that he is under the influence of no "malice or ill-will" against the prisoner at the bar? Such malice would vitiate his testimony. It is on the same principle, that "enmity in the heart against God" must be regarded as subverting confidence in the judgment of mankind on the fundamental principles of morals — "In reviewing the systems of Zeno, Hobbes, Hume, Hazlett, or Bentham, we give ourselves no trouble to inquire whether the lives of these writers were in all respects conformable to just rules; retaining in mind the obvious distinction between a theory of morals proposed to the consideration of the schools, and a set of precepts meant for regulating the discharge of the duties of life." — P. 327. And yet it might not be an inappropriate or unprofitable inquiry, how far the systems of such philosophers were affected by

that principle of evil of which we have just spoken, and which constitutes the sad characteristic of man's fallen nature. Is it usual for men of infidel principles, or of philosophic impiety, to lay the foundation of their moral systems, for example, in *supreme love to God?* Will the reviewer venture to say, that their speculations, in this and other respects, are not at all affected by their state of heart and their character? If he does, I must be allowed to refer him to his Bible for a better knowledge of human nature.

After expressing his agreement with me as to the nature of conscience, he quotes a passage of some length, and then subjoins — "Here Dr. W. deserves praise for being right, but not for being strictly consistent. He gives conscience a higher office and authority than can properly belong to the mental constitution of a creature so radically depraved as he usually represents man to be. But he indirectly acknowledges that, though the disposition may be corrupt, the judgment may be pure and accurate; and that it is perfectly possible to distinguish between them. A bad man may therefore theorize on moral science as wisely and conclusively as the most pious of philosophers. The only difference is, that the emotions in the breast of the one will have little resemblance to those excited in the other." — Pp. 332, 333. — I have read the passage quoted; and can find in it no such acknowledgment, direct or indirect, as imputed to me. I can never admit that a "corrupt disposition" can subsist without exerting any influence upon the purity and accuracy of the judgment on subjects to which the disposition relates: — and I may safely challenge the reviewer to point out any passage where such admission if contained. I have not, however, entered into any discussion of the *direct* influence of the fall on man's intellectual powers. The only influence of which I have treated is the influence of perverted moral dispositions upon their exercise and their decisions on moral subjects. — If indeed I have "confounded those views of morality which respect the practical conduct of life, with the more recondite disquisitions on ethics regarded as a science, of which the object is to determine the abstract qualities, so to speak, of good and evil, in connection with certain feelings and judgments of the human mind," and by so doing have "led myself and my readers into much unnecessary perplexity;" — then have I egregiously failed in one of my leading and contemplated objects. To myself it appears, that the very quotations made by the reviewer might be adduced as proofs of the contrary. But the decision rests not of course with me.

This leads me to notice a *second* general and pervading allegation in the critique: it is expressed thus — "That Dr. W. holds a place among those who have not formed a correct notion of the objects contemplated by the moral philosopher, will appear manifest to every one who reads his book with attention." — Page 323. How far this imputation does not fall with more justice upon the critic himself, a few observations may suffice to show. The critic concurs in sentiment with the anonymous writer of the article *Moral Philosophy* in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, when that writer says — "Moral philosophy inquires, not how man might have been, but how he is, constituted; not into what principles his actions may be artfully resolved, but from what principles and dispositions they actually flow." He expresses his concurrence in these terms — "Our business, in the several fields of geology, of animal nature, and of moral science, is to mark the properties of things as they actually present themselves, without presuming to decide whether they are what God meant them to be or not." — Page 324. Now, whatever may be the case in regard to geology and animal nature, it does appear to me, in regard to "*moral science*," that if we have not in view, in the investigation of things as they actually present themselves," to ascertain "*whether they are what God meant them to be, or otherwise*," — the only object in such science that is at all worthy of pursuit, or entitles it to the designation, is entirely left out of sight. The ultimate object of all our inquiries on such subjects should surely be, not to determine what *is*, but what *ought to be*. This I conceive to be the appropriate aim of all moral science; to ascertain the original grounds of moral obligation, as well as the law of the creature's duty. The question, therefore, is, whether from the investigation of what *is*, in human nature "as it now actually presents itself," there are correct and sufficient *data* for determining *what ought to be*. If not, our investigation conducts us to no conclusion that is worth the finding, — at any rate, not to the conclusion at which moral science ought to aim. We settle certain facts; but we determine no general principles.

"It will be admitted, too, we are persuaded," says the reviewer, "upon suitable reflection, that human nature in its present state is the proper subject of ethical investigation; because it is only as connected with its actual feelings, propensities, and wants, that it can be viewed as the basis of a consistent theory of morals: " — and again, "there is no other basis on which the ethical philosopher can rear a

scientific structure. If 'man be the proper study of man,' it must be man as he really exists; displaying his powers, passions, and propensities in connection with the various demands of society, and even with the qualities of the material world which influence so deeply his character and his destination." — Pp. 320, 331. Be it so, that the study of man must be the study of man *as he is* — for to us, what else can it be? — still the question recurs, whether from this study of man as he *is*, the philosopher can arrive at the correct and certain knowledge of what he *ought to be*. It is the very design of the earlier Lectures in the *Christian Ethics*, to show how inadequate and insecure, as a basis of moral theorizing, human nature in its present condition actually is; to evince that it has been, in part at least, from this very cause, — from their seeking in it the principles of their moral theories, — that philosophers have so egregiously failed and erred; and hence to manifest the impropriety of separating ethical science from theology, and framing theories on principles excogitated by philosophy independently of the dictates of revelation. And between the law of duty and the theoretical principles of moral obligation, I have endeavored carefully to discriminate:— with what success, it is not mine to determine.

In a favorite analogy of the reviewer, to which he more than once recurs, there appears to me to lurk a fallacy. "The studies," says he, "of the geologist, the chemist, and the botanist, might be met with an objection similar to that started by Dr. W. against the researches of the speculative moralist. The terraqueous globe, it may be said, is no longer what it was when it proceeded from the hand of the great Creator. It bears upon it the marks of a curse. The surface is torn and shattered, and the strata which compose its inward parts are dislocated, bent, and in many instances removed from their original position. To obtain a true theory of the earth, therefore, we ought, it might be asserted, to ascend to the era of its primitive order and beauty; for at present we contemplate only the ruins of a magnificent system, from the study of which we can barely conjecture what it must have been before it was subjected to that violence of which it everywhere exhibits the marks." — Page 321.

I take the case of the geologist, to avoid prolixity, and as being obviously the most appropriate. The accuracy of the analogy depends, of course, entirely on the sameness or the discrepancy of the *objects*, respectively, of the geologist and the moralist. If the

object of the latter be indeed no more than to ascertain, as a question of *fact*, what human nature *now is*, — not how it was, but how it now is constituted, — I have nothing to say. But if the object of the ethical philosopher be, from what human nature is, to ascertain, what are the great general principles of moral rectitude, or, in the language of the reviewer, "to discover the grounds on which the legislation of virtue and vice has its original basis," then the comparison is inappropriate and fallacious. Suppose there were certain great principles, (if I may so express myself,) of *physical rectitude, — principles of creation*, — to be ascertained by "drilling and boring the solid earth," and examining its strata, its exuviæ, and all the arcana of its present structure, the analogy would be sufficiently appropriate. And if it be so that "the surface is torn and shattered, and the strata which compose its inward parts dislocated, bent, and in many instances removed from their original position;" if it be so, that we now "contemplate only the ruins of a magnificent system;" then, assuredly, there *are* such principles of creation or of world-making — such principles of physical rectitude, of which we may form a very inadequate and even erroneous conception from the mere geological examination of the earth *as it is*. Now, whether there be any such ulterior object in geology or not, as that of rising from facts to principles, certainly there is in moral science. There is, I repeat, the deduction from what *is* of what *ought to be*, — the deduction of the true principles of morals: — and this will be found to amount to much the same thing with ascertaining the *moral nature of Deity* — the characters of that infinite Being, who is the eternal prototype of all rectitude in his creatures. The question is, whether these things are capable of being ascertained from the examination of human nature as it at present appears, — the examination being at the same time conducted by an examinator, who is himself a subject of the very evil propensities by which the nature is characterized. "I trow not."

The reviewer speaks of my mind being "cramped by my narrow views." I can only say, that my sincere wish and prayer are, to have views neither wider nor narrower, on all such subjects, than the Christian standard of truth warrants. I have already thanked him for correcting a mistake into which I had inadvertently fallen, with regard to the phraseology of Dr. Brown; and I desire to be kept open to conviction on more important points, and to reckon every man my friend who displaces error from my mind, and sub-

stitutes truth. As to "*flippancy*" (*Rev.* p. 330,) I freely confess I was not prepared for any charge of *that* kind. I have studied my own character very unsuccessfully, if it belongs to me; and I blushed to see it associated with my name. I can assure the reviewer, there never were strictures written with more self-diffidence than those on Butler; and I have the comfort of believing that the reviewer stands alone in the imputation.

NOTE M. Page. 179.

It is impossible to imagine anything more pregnant, not with absurdity only, but with profanity, than some of the assertions which have been made, both with regard to the Divine *power* in the natural world, and to the Divine *will* in the moral world, by mystics who have thought that they were giving God glory. When, for example, it has been conceived necessary to omnipotence, that it should be able to effect *contradictions*, — such as making a thing to be and not to be at the same time, — or to be in two places at once, — or not to be where it is, — or to be greater or less than itself, — or two and two to be more or fewer than four, &c. &c. To assert the ability of the Divine power to effect such things, is mere burlesque. The omnipotence of God is his ability to do whatever can be conceived of by the most perfect mind. But contradictions, from their very nature, never can be so conceived of. The truth is, such contradictions are absolutely *nothing:* — being contrary to the immutable nature of things, they are destructive of themselves; so that a power to do them is a power to do — *nothing*. And the same thing is true of suppositions made respecting the absolute supremacy of the Divine *will* over *good and evil right and wrong* in the *moral* world. When the lengths to which these suppositions have gone is considered, it is not without reason that Sir James Mackintosh speaks of the doctrine which "represents morality to be founded in will" as "the most pernicious of moral heresies." We cannot have a better illustration of the grossness of its folly, or the undesigned though real profanity of its tendencies, than the sentiment which he quotes from "William of Ockham, the most justly celebrated of English schoolmen," — that "if God had

commanded his creatures to hate himself, the hatred of God would ever be the duty of man." Having cited this sentiment, Sir James adds — "A monstrous hyperbole, into which he was perhaps betrayed by his denial of the doctrine of general ideas, the pre-existence of which in the Eternal Intellect, was commonly regarded as the foundation of the immutable nature of morality. The doctrine of Ockham, which, by necessary implication, refuses moral attributes to the Deity, and contradicts the existence of a moral government, is practically equivalent to atheism. As all devotional feelings have moral qualities for their sole objects; as no being can inspire love or reverence otherwise than by those qualities which are naturally amiable or venerable, this doctrine would, if men were consistent, extinguish piety, or, in other words, annihilate religion. Yet, so astonishing are the contradictions of human nature, that this most impious of all opinions, probably originated in a pious solicitude to magnify the sovereignty of God, and to exalt his authority even above his own goodness." — *Prelim. Diss.* p. 310.

The sentiment that virtue is founded in the Divine will is ably combated by Dr. Dwight, in the ninety-ninth sermon of his Theology. The consequences arising from it are vividly traced; while the distinction between virtue being founded in the will of God in regard to its essential principles, and the will of God being the rule or law of duty to his creatures, is kept clearly in view. It should be regarded by us as being quite as great a contradiction in the department of morals, to speak of God changing, by arbitrary will, the nature of moral rectitude, as in the department of geometry it would be a contradiction to speak of the possible converse of any of its axiomatic principles. It would be to suppose Deity, indeed, to change, by a volition his own essential and necessary moral nature.

NOTE N. Page 183.

THERE certainly is no subject on which it is easier for us to get beyond our depth, than this, of the *necessity* of the Divine existence and attributes. In illustration of the remark, may, perhaps be appropriately noticed, the statement of Dr. Clarke as to necessity of existence — that it is not a property *consequent* upon the supposition

of the thing existing, but *antecedently* (not indeed in time, for nothing can precede eternity, but in the order of nature,) *antecedently* the *cause* or *ground* of that existence. This is exceedingly subtile. I confess myself quite at a loss for a clear apprehension of his meaning; or rather, I should perhaps say, of the possibility of what he means; — of an abstract necessity, possessing an antecedent existence, as the ground or cause of the very existence, to which, at the same time, *as a property it pertains!* But, while I cannot comprehend this, I shall not attempt to make the matter plainer; for I cannot think a thought about it without losing myself; and to roam through "wandering mazes," where we can "find no end," but must only have the trouble of groping our way back again, is, to say the least, an unprofitable employment.

If ever there was a mind capable of constructing a clear demonstration *à priori* of the being and attributes of God, it was, perhaps, the mind of this acute philosophical divine. I confess myself, however, to be more than sceptical as to the possibility of constructing such an argument, — one that is, in all respects, entitled to the designation. If I have any right conception at all of an argument *à priori*, it is an argument in which from certain principles or premises, we draw a conclusion as to something that *must be*, independently of all opportunity of observing or ascertaing what *actually is*. For example: — Assuming the existence of an intelligent Being, possessed of perfect wisdom, we conclude that in the works of such an intelligence, there must, in every instance, be found the perfection of skill. We conclude this *à priori;* that is, previously to our at all examining, or having any opportunity to examine the works themselves. The difference between this and the argument *à posteriori*, is manifest from their very designations. In the latter, we are supposed to know the works, and to infer, from the existing marks of skill, the previous existence and operation of a wise intelligence. In the former we reason *forward;* in the latter *backward:* in the former, from what *is* to what *must be;* in the latter, from what *is* to what *must have been*. Now, in these circumstances, — supposing this idea of an *à priori* argument to be a correct one, I am unable to form the most remote conception of such an argument for the Divine *existence*. The reason is, that there is no principle whatever which can be imagined previous to it, from which the conclusion might be drawn; a previous necessity being an abstraction of which no conception can be formed by any mind. — Assum-

ing the existence of such a Being, I can form to myself the conception of certain *à priori* inferences respecting the qualities which must belong to his nature: — but previously to, and independently of, that existence, I cannot conceive of anything from which it could possibly be inferred. The postulate, that *something now is*, is, I grant, a postulate which no man can refuse whose intellect is sound. But still, it *is* a postulate. It is the assumption of something *present*, from which we proceed to reason to something *past*. The argument goes *backward*, — from what *now is*, to what *has been*. The argument for the *existence* of Deity drawn from the postulate that *something now is*, is precisely the same in *kind* with the argument for the *intelligence* of Deity drawn from the postulate *that something indicative of design now is*. When it is said, Something now is, therefore something must always have been, it is as really an argument *à posteriori*, as when we say, Here are marks of design, therefore there must have been a designer. The only difference is, that the one relates to simple *being*, the other to *character*. They both alike go backward from the *present* to the *past*, from what *is* to what *must have been*.

Space and *duration* are, in their nature, however seemingly simple, really very abstruse. Although they be necessary to our conceptions of all other existence, they cannot (as far as I can see) be grounds on which the necessity of any other existence can legitimately be deduced. To say that space itself is necessary, and that the existence of which it is a property must possess the same necessity, does not seem to the purpose: — because, whenever we speak of a property of any existence, the existence of which it *is* a property *is already pre-supposed*. But this is a very different thing from the proposition, that, from the necessary existence of space, there must necessarily *arise the existence itself* of a self-existent intelligence. Here, I frankly own, I am not metaphysician enough to discern the link of connection.

Sir James Mackintosh expresses the same opinion respecting this celebrated argument, entertained by Reid, and Stewart, and others before him: — "Roused by the prevalence of the doctrine of Spinoza and Hobbes, he (Clarke) endeavored to demonstrate the being and attributes of God, from a few axioms and definitions, after the manner of geometry: an attempt, in which, with all his powers of argument, it must be owned that he is compelled sometimes tacitly to assume what the laws of reasoning required him to prove; and

that, on the whole, his failure may be regarded as a proof that such a mode of argument is beyond the faculties of man." — *Prelim. Diss.* p. 327.

NOTE O. Page 219.

I HAVE representated the religious principle, the love of God, as the first principle of morals, and indispensable as the motive in all that bears the name of virtue. Among the ingenious speculations of Hartley, in which he endeavors to discover the origination, and trace the progressive development, of the various passions, desires, and affections of the human mind, by the *law of association*, we find him representing piety, or, as he terms it, *theopathy*, as the last in order of the virtues thus generated. In the manner in which he accounts, by a process equally natural according to his fundamental law, for the origination both of the virtuous and vicious affections, there is no recognition of the scripture doctrine of human depravity. The religious affections, the love and the fear of God, are the product of the same natural law of association by which all the rest are explained. He admits, indeed, that "piety in general, and among the bulk of mankind, is not had in great honor."* — But how does he account for this? Not from the depraved tendencies of human nature, — not from the "enmity against God," which is predicated of it in the Scriptures, and which it requires divine influence to counteract and cure; but, among other causes of a similar complexion, from its being "in the order of our progress the last of the virtues, so that, having few votaries, it must have few advocates."† The other causes enumerated by him are such as imply no dislike of *true piety*, but only of superstition, enthusiasm, and hypocrisy. In making religion, by a process which begins with self, and rises through the various gradations of the social affections, the last of the virtues, which may ultimately swallow up all the others, — it is assumed that the previous desires and passions and affections, commonly reckoned among the virtues, are virtuous *independently of the religious principle*. — and that the "theopathetic affection"

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* *Priestley's Hartley, p. 286.* † Ibid.

is only an additional one, of a higher order, and naturally generated out of the rest. We are more than jealous of such a representation; as if piety were only the last and loftiest height, to which we are to mount through all the inferior grades of virtue. We must contend, that in all these inferior virtues piety must be their spirit and principle to entitle them to the designation; — that, while there is, in the fallen nature of man, a melancholy aversion to God and godliness, yet, by his blessing on parental tuition, the simple principles of piety may be introduced to influential operation at a very early stage, and that God may thus "perfect praise out of the mouths of babes and sucklings." — At all events, the whole system is out of order, when piety, instead of being introduced at the root, to pervade, with its vivifying and fructifying influence, the whole tree, in its great branches and remotest twigs is to be looked for at the top, after the consummation of its growth, — as the crowning fruit, rather than as the productive germ, — as the completion of human excellence and human happiness, rather than as the first principle of human duty.

A similar objection may be considered as lying against the statement contained in the closing sentence of Sir James Mackintosh's summary of the moral theory of Butler, in which, from subsequent expressions of his own, the commentator appears to acquiesce: — "Moral distinctions are thus pre-supposed, before a step can be made towards religion: virtue leads to piety: God is to be loved, because goodness is the object of love; and it is only after the mind rises through human morality to divine perfection, that all the virtues and duties are seen to hang from the throne of God." — *Prelim. Dissert.* p. 345. Thus we have virtue without piety; — morality independent of, and introductory to, religion; — and love to an abstract goodness as the foundation and reason of our love to God, although it is in the eternal and necessary nature of God that all goodness has its origin and its prototype, and although it is its conformity to this nature that constitutes goodness what it is. Were not human nature in a fallen and apostate condition, a sense of God would enter the soul with the first dawn of reason, and "growing with its growth, and strengthening with its strength," would be the habitually controlling principle of every movement of the inner, and every action of the outer man.

NOTE P. Page 225.

In the sentence to which this note is affixed, the reader has a summary of the doctrine it is my anxious desire to establish and recommend in this Lecture, as well as generally throughout the volume: — "*Irreligion* and *moral principle* cannot exist together in the same bosom; for irreligion is the rejection of that authority in which all moral obligation has its origin: — and to live *without God* is necessarily to live *without virtue.*" In the *Imperial Magazine for January*, amidst much that is favorable, for which I thank the unknown reviewer, there is one general objection insisted upon, as, to a certain extent, pervading and vitiating the whole work — namely, that the subject is treated *too theologically*, — there being "an almost exclusive attention to theology, and a neglect of the science of ethics *as a distinct science;*" — that the science of ethics "has no place" assigned it "among *pure and separate sciences;*" — that, in a word, "the science of *pure ethics* has been *left untouched.*" — This theological mode of contemplating and discussing the subject, it is alleged, while it "stamps upon the work a high value in its most important character, and prepares us to expect from it much Christian instruction, still renders it improbable, that the science of ethics will be recognized by the author distinctly and independently, or at least that in that character it will receive justice at his hands." — "After disclaiming all controversy with the atheist and the infidel, and supposing *in limine* the authenticity and authority of the Bible to be admitted, he proceeds in his first Lecture, to lay down the respective provinces of philosophy and theology. And here we think that his remarks first exhibit that almost exclusive attention to theology, and that neglect of the science of ethics, as a distinct science, to which we have already adverted. A few passages will exhibit clearly Dr. W.'s view of the 'respective provinces' of the two sciences. In our humble opinion, they go far to show, that he *assigns to one of them no province at all.*" — I most readily grant it. It is my very object to show, that the science of morals has "no province at all," independently of theology; and that it cannot be *philosophically* discussed, except on *theological principles*. The purport of the first Lecture is not, as the reviewer has inaccurately expressed it, to "lay down the respective provinces of *the two sciences,*" as if I admitted their mutually inde-

pendent existence, that of morals as independent of theology, or that of theology as independent of morals, and had in view to define the bounding lines. No such thing. The object is to show, that there can be no such bounding lines drawn between them; that the separation is unreasonable and mischievous; and that that philosophy is most unphilosophical, which, on such a subject, either fails to examine the claims of the sacred volume, or, when its claims have been substantiated, refuses to bow to its authority. The observations of the reviewer have only served to impress me the more strongly with the importance of maintaining the position which I have assumed. I avow, without reserve, that I own no such science as the "distinct and independent" science of "pure ethics," — that is, of ethics independent of theology, — of morals independent of religion. I am sorry that the light in which I have endeavored to set this subject, in the first and seventh Lectures, should not have met the approbation of the reviewer; for there is no point on which I feel more solicitous that Christian students of the science of morals should take the high ground which, it appears to me, the standard to which they all appeal represents as the only legitimate one.

After a citation or two from Lect. I., the reviewer says: — "These preliminary statements appear to us to proceed upon the assumption, which we think erroneous, that the Bible contains *all* the principles of ethics; in fact, that it (ethics) has no place among pure and separate sciences, — that it is not to be considered as that science which teaches the social duties owed by man to man, *and those alone;* in fact, they seem to deny that there is a set of principles on which men owe duties to each other, irrespectively of their duty to the Supreme Being, and whether or not they know and believe in the one true God." — They not only *seem* to deny it; they *do* do deny it: — and the grounds of the denial are more fully brought out, whether satisfactorily or not, in the seventh Lecture, "On the Identity of Morality and Religion." I acknowledge no "set of principles on which men owe duties to each other, *irrespectively* of their duty to the Supreme Being:" — for the duties which men owe to each other, and the social principles from which they must be discharged, form a part of the will of that Being; and it is as a part of his will, from a due regard to his authority, that they must be done. My views on this subject are summarily expressed in these sentences: — "According to the Scriptures, then, there is no morality without religion; for of the two great principles in which the law of God is summed up,

the first is the religious principle. And it stands first, not as insulated from the other, and capable of being neglected while the other is duly obeyed; but as demanding the first attention, and indispensable to that moral state of the heart, that is necessary to any acceptable obedience whatever."—Lect. VII. I earnestly wish this position sifted to the uttermost; being fully persuaded, that the more closely it is investigated, the more strongly will it recommend itself to the Christian mind, as the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures and of enlightened reason.

I speak not now of the specialities of obligation to love God, arising from the peculiar discoveries of the gospel. These are discussed in the concluding Lecture. But if the law of nature, or of conscience, do not teach men who are destitute of revelation, that *love to God* is the first and highest of their obligatory principles, and the foundation of all the rest, — this is only an affecting evidence of the degeneracy of their nature. It was not so originally. Love to God was the fundamental and pervading principle of the entire system of primitive morality. I have, therefore, no idea of its being "more natural and nearer to the truth," as this reviewer alleges, "to assign as the fundamental principle of ethical morality, the conformity of conduct to the dictates of conscience, leaving the further instructions and precepts of Christianity as an independent and additional light, of which comparatively few are cognizant:"— because either conscience dictates, independently of revelation, the *love of God* as the principle of all virtue, or it does not. If it *does*, then it establishes my position, that there is no morality without religion, by recognizing the religious principle as the essential element of virtue:—if it does *not*, are we to assume as the "fundamental principle of ethical morality" a faculty which (call it by what name you will) leaves out, in its estimate of character, what, according to revelation, is the first and most essential element in all moral duty? It is the sin and guilt of man, that conscience does not teach him this elementary lesson, as well as revelation: and its failure in this is one of the principal considerations by which its incompetency to be a sure and adequate criterion, or standard, of moral rectitude, is evinced. I have no conception of a system of "pure ethics," in which the Divine Being has no place. Such pure ethics are *impure*, — the offspring of a nature that is "enmity against God." That cannot be the "fundamental principle of ethical morality," which leaves out the foundation altogether.

NOTE Q. Page 235.

I HAVE mentioned among the excellencies of this precept, its *simplicity*. It is unembarrassed by metaphysical and abstract subtleties. It is level to every capacity. Every man at once apprehends and feels it. The weakest mind can understand, and the slenderest memory retain it. I do not mean to say, that it is incapable of being perverted, of having any objections or difficulties started against it by a crooked and ingenious casuistry. What *is there* of which this can be affirmed? There are not a few precepts, which, when they are applied to the conduct of others, we instantly understand and approve, which we like not so well, and are consequently dexterous in controverting, when they bear upon ourselves; — precepts, of which we like better to be the *objects* than the *subjects*. In these different circumstances, selfishness prompts to diversity of interpretation, and to consider that as unreasonable for others to expect from us, which we should deem it quite fair and moderate for us to expect from them. A rule may, in itself, be admirable both for its justice and its simplicity, although it is not beyond the possibility of being twisted and tortured by a selfish policy.

There is a view which has been taken of the precept by an eminent authority, on which I wish to offer in this note a few brief remarks. It has been regarded as a precept which admits of *no limitation*, but must be interpreted to the letter; so that a man who, under the dominion of selfishness, forms and cherishes unreasonable desires and expectations, brings himself, *ipso facto*, under obligation to act, in his conduct to others, according to the full extent of those desires and expectations. "There is no distinction laid down," says Dr. Chalmers, "between things fair and things unfair, between things reasonable and things unreasonable. Both are comprehended in the 'all things whatsoever.' The signification is plain and absolute, that, let the thing be what it may, if you wish others to do that thing for you, it lies imperatively on you to do the very same thing for them also. You may wish your next door neighbor to present you with half his fortune. In this case, we know not how you are to escape from the conclusion, that you are bound to present him with the half of yours. Or you may wish a relation to burden himself with the expenses of all your family. It is then impossible to save you from the positive obligation, if you are equally able for it, of

doing the same service to the family of another." — "Let a man give himself up to a strict and literal observance of the precept in this verse," (Matt. vii. 12., the text of his discourse,) "and it will impress a twofold direction upon him. It will not only guide him to certain performances of good in behalf of others, but it will guide him to the regulation of his own desires of good from them. The more selfish and unbounded his desires are, the larger are those performances with the obligation of which he is burdened. The more he gives way to ungenerous and extravagant wishes from those who are around him, the heavier and more insupportable is the load of duty which he brings upon himself, The commandment is quite imperative, and there is no escaping from it; and if he, by the excess of his selfishness, should render it impracticable, then the whole punishment due to the guilt of casting aside the authority of this commandment follows in that train of punishment which is annexed to selfishness. There is one way of being relieved from such a burden. There is one way of reducing this precept to a moderate and practicable requirement; and that is, just to give up selfishness — just to stifle all ungenerous desires — just to moderate every wish of service or liberality from others down to the standard of what is right and equitable," &c. — *Discourses on the Application of Christianity to the commercial and ordinary Concerns of Life. Disc. V.*

This view of the matter, which places the check on the indulgence of our own desires, and allows of no other limit to the obligation but the repression of selfish and extravagant wishes, is exceedingly ingenious and simple; it is amply and finely illustrated; and I am not disposed unqualifiedly to controvert it. It appears, however, in some points, to require not a little caution in the adoption and application of it. I do not at all dispute the propriety and the obligation of keeping our own desires and expectations under due limitation and control. But I am entitled to make the supposition of this reasonable obligation having been transgressed, and of some such unreasonable wishes having been formed as those which in the preceding extracts are specified — the wish of half our neighbor's fortune, or of his undertaking the support of all our family. It is here that the question of casuistry arises. In such a case, are we under obligation, by the law of God, to do to the person from whom we have looked for such things, or to some other, according to the full amount of our extravagant wishes? Here I hesitate. The wish

in itself is, on the supposition, unreasonable and wrong. It is improper, and inconsistent with the divine law, for me to form and entertain it. Does it then, by the circumstance of my having thus formed and entertained it, become right, and even obligatory, to act upon towards another? — right and obligatory to *do* what it is wrong and culpable to *wish*? It is true, that it is the duty of all alike, of others as well as of ourselves, to keep their desires under control, and to suppress such wishes: — but in such a world, this is what we have no reason to expect. The question relates, not to the duty of restraining them, but to what is duty when the restraint *has been* forgotten: — and I repeat the question, Can it be right for me to do what it is wrong for me to wish? Let me illustrate my meaning by the supposition of a case of a still clearer and more decisive kind. I may desire that which is not merely extravagant and unreasonable, but in its nature *unlawful*. True, it is a sinful desire; and I ought not to indulge or even to form it. But that is not the point. It must be supposed, that I *have* formed and indulged it. It is clear that my having done so can never render it right for me, far less obligatory, to do to another what I have wished done for myself. A man may wish a thing, which if done *for* him, might benefit the interests of *others*, but, if done *by* him, would be very detrimental to those interests. Can it become his duty to do it because he has wished it, when it is thus to prove injurious to others as well as to himself? A selfish man may desire to have all his wishes gratified together. Does this lay him under obligation to gratify all the wishes of others? That would be to forget that the wishes of others, and their general state of mind, may be as far wrong as his own. A wrong wish in himself can never oblige him no fulfil a wrong wish in another.

True it is, however, that, in proportion as a man's desires for himself are large and extravagant, he aggravates his condemnation if he applies a stinted and penurious measure to his dealings with other men. "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." It is, without question, one of the excellencies of the rule before us, that it is left open on the one side, and that there is no limitation placed where we are sufficiently sure of placing it ourselves, and where the danger is that we make it too narrow. We should, on the one hand, beware of forming unreasonable desires, and then condemning, as regardless of the golden rule, those who do not see it their duty to gratify them: — and, on the other hand, we

should keep in mind on which side we are most in danger of erring, — the side on which temptation lies, — the side to which selfishness draws: — and since, in judging of the desires of others, our decisions are apt to be greatly biased, — so that, when we are flattering ourselves that we have gone generously far, a disinterested judge might think we had kept even within, and much within the limit; we ought ever to make due allowance for this. The rule limits the weights in our own scale; but imposes no restrictron with regard to the opposite one; and therefore, aware of the disposition of selfishness to scrimp weights and measures to others, — if we act up to the true spirit of the rule, instead of weighing our dealings towards them with the minute grains and scruples of rigid right and justice, we will be ready, whenever we can afford it, to throw in a pound of kindness.

NOTE R. Page 250.

For the *principle* of the simple view given in the text of the question relative to the existence of disinterested affections, I acknowledge myself indebted to Butler. In his Sermons on the love of our neighbor, he has placed it in a very clear and satisfactory light, — as the following extracts will show: — "The principle we call self-love never seeks anything external for the sake of the thing, but only as a means of happiness or good: — particular affections rest in the external things themselves. One belongs to man as a reasonable creature reflecting upon his own interest or happiness. The others, though quite distinct from reason, are as much a part of human nature. That all particular appetites and passions are towards external things themselves, distinct from the pleasure arising from them, is manifest from hence; that *there could not be this pleasure, were it not for that prior suitableness between the object and the passion:* there could be no enjoyment or delight from one thing more than from another, from eating food more than from swallowing a stone, if there were not an affection or appetite for one thing more than for another. Every particular affection, even the love of our neighbor, *is as really our own affection, as self-love;* and the pleasure arising from its gratification *is as much my own pleasure,*

as the pleasure self-love would have from knowing I myself should be happy some time hence would be my own pleasure. And if, because every particular affection is a man's own, and the pleasure arising from its gratification is his own pleasure, or pleasure to himself, such particular affection must be called self-love; according to this way of speaking, no creature can possibly act but merely from self-love; and every action and every affection whatever is to be resolved up into this principle. But then this is not the language of mankind: or, if it were, we should want words to express the difference, between the principle of an action proceeding *from* cool consideration that it will be to my own advantage, and an action, suppose of revenge or of friendship, by which a man runs upon certain ruin, to do evil or to do good to another. It is manifest the principles of these actions are totally different, and so want different words to be distinguished by: all that they agree in is, that they both proceed from, and are done to gratify, an inclination *in a man's self*. But the principle or inclination in one case is self-love; in the other, hatred or love of another. There is, then, a distinction between the cool principle of self-love, or general desire of our own happiness, as one principle of action, and the particular affections towards particular external objects, as another part of our nature, and another principle of action."—"Is there any less inconsistence between the love of inanimate things, or of creatures merely sensitive, and self-love; than between self-love and the love of our neighbor? Is desire of and delight in the happiness of another any more a diminution of self-love, than desire of and delight in the esteem of another? They do both equally desire and delight in somewhat external to themselves: — either both or neither are so. The object of self-love is expressed in the term self: and every appetite of sense, and every particular affection of the heart, are equally interested or disinterested, because the objects of them all are equally self or somewhat else." — "The short of the matter is no more than this. Happiness consists in the gratification of certain affections, appetites, passions, with objects which are by nature adapted to them. Self-love may indeed set us on to gratify these: but happiness or enjoyment has no immediate connection with self-love, but arises from such gratifications alone. Love of our neighbor is one of these affections. This, considered as a virtuous principle, is gratified by a consciousness of endeavoring to promote the good of others: but, considered as a natural affection, its gratification consists in the actual

accomplishment of this endeavor. Now, indulgence or gratification of this affection, whether in that consciousness or in this accomplishment, has the same respect to interest as the gratification of any other affection: — they equally proceed from, or do not proceed from, self-love; they equally include, or equally exclude, this principle. Thus it appears, that benevolence, or the pursuit of public good, hath at least as great respect to self-love, and the pursuit of private good, as any other particular passions and their respective pursuits." — "As it is ridiculous to assert, that self-love and the love of our neighbor are the same; so neither is it asserted, that following these different affections hath the same tendency and respect to our own interest. The comparison is not between self-love and the love of our neighbor; between pursuit of our own interest and the interest of others: but between the several particular affections in human nature towards external objects, as one part of the comparison, — and the one particular affection to the good of our neighbor, as the other part of it: — and it has been shown, that all these have the same respect to self-love and private interest."

NOTE S. Page 285.

The reader will find some observations equally distinguished for correct discrimination and scriptural devotion, both on the theory of Edwards, and the principles of virtue in general, in the "Eclectic Review," for February, 1823, Vol. XIX. p. 97, &c. Art. *Joyce on Love to God.* — I perfectly concur with the writer of that article in thinking, that "this most profound thinker and able polemic, skilled as he was in the unraveling of sophistry and the demolition of error, failed in the very outset of his attempt to construct a moral theory."

It would be injustice to a mind of the highest order, whose purified and elevated faculties are now finding full scope for all their heavenly expansion in the services of the upper sanctuary — not to refer to the sentiments of the late Rev. Robert Hall, on the principles of Edwards' theory. They are to be found, in a forcible and condensed form, in a Note to the earliest and perhaps the most splendid

and powerful of his published Sermons — his Modern Infidelity considered. — *Works*, Vol. I. pp. 58, 59.

I have quoted Sir James Mackintosh, on one or two points, in the principles and the phraseology of Edwards. I cannot think, however, that in all respects he has done full justice either to the theory or to its illustrious author. For example, the theory is brought, in the following terms, to a very summary trial: — The justness of the compound proportion on which human virtue is made to depend, is capable of being tried by an easy test. If we suppose the greatest of evil spirits to have a hundred times the bad passions of Marcus Aurelius, and at the same time a hundred times his faculties, or, in Edwards' language, a hundred times his quantity of being, it follows from this moral theory, that we ought to esteem and love the devil exactly in the same degree as we esteem and love Marcus Aurelius." But in thus balancing the *passions* against the *faculties*, — making the one a counterpoise to the other, — neutralizing the influence of the former by the counter influence of the latter, and making the latter so to compensate for the former, as to bring our moral *esteem and love* to an equilibrium between two such opposite characters, — is there not an overlooking of one of the essential principles of the theory? According to the theory, the *love of being* does not include *complacence* or *esteem*. That sentiment arises, not from the primary but the secondary ground of virtuous affection, namely, the discernment in another of the same benevolence or love of being which we ourselves are supposed to experience.

To say, therefore, that "according to this moral theory, we ought to esteem and love the devil exactly in the same degree as we esteem and love Marcus Aurelius," because, although the devil has a hundred times his bad passions, he has, at the same time, as a counterpoise to this, a hundred times his faculties or quantity of being, is evidently to make the quantity of being the ground, not only of the affection of *good-will*, but of the affection of *moral esteem* or *complacency*. The devil, being destitute of benevolence, or love to being, is destitute of that which, in the theory, is the sole ground of this latter sentiment: — and, if Marcus Aurelius be supposed to *have* the benevolence, he has that which alone can inspire the esteem, and which cannot be compensated by ten thousand times the amount of being; for if infinite being could be supposed destitute of this benevolence, there would, according to the theory, be infinite ground for the opposite sentiment to complacence. And even as to

the affection of benevolence or good-will; the theory provides for a larger exercise of it on the ground of character, or the possession of the same benevolence. The measure of the good-will is to be a compound of the quantity of being, and the moral character:— "When any one under the influence of general benevolence, sees another being possessed of the like general benevolence, this attaches his heart to him, and draws forth greater love to him, than merely his having existence; because, so far as the being beloved has love to being in general; so far his own being is, as it were, enlarged, extends to, and in some sort comprehends, being in general: and therefore, he that is governed by love to being in general must of necessity have complacence in him, *and the greater degree of benevolence to him*, as it were out of gratitude to him for his love to general existence, that his own heart is extended and united to, and so looks on its interest as its own. It is because his heart is thus united to being in general, that he looks on a benevolent propensity to being in general, wherever he sees it, as the beauty of the being in whom it is,—an excellency that renders him worthy of esteem, complacence, *and the greater good-will.*"

I cannot close this note without observing, that the decided attachment of Edwards to the fundamental articles of the gospel, as he understood them, and as they are understood by the great body of evangelical professors, has exposes him to the charge of *narrow-mindedness* from the eminent historian of Ethical Science,— which he would himself have meekly borne as a part of his cross,— and which all who think with him may expect, not only from the philosophers of this world, but from those also who hold the profession of Christianity with an *undefined liberalism*, which hardly leaves it an article of peculiarity. After quoting from Edwards the sentiment that "true religion consists in a great measure in holy affections;" and that "a love of divine things for the beauty and sweetness of their moral excellency, is the spring of all holy affections,"—Sir James proceeds: "Had he suffered this noble principle to take the right road to all its fair consequences, he would have entirely concurred with Plato, with Shaftesbury, and with Malebranche, in devotion to the 'first good, first perfect, and first fair.' But he thought it necessary afterwards to limit his doctrine to his own persuasion, by denying that moral excellence could be discovered in divine things by those Christians who did not take the same view with him of their religion. All others, and some who hold his doc-

trines with a more enlarged spirit, may adopt his principle without any limitation." — *Prelim. Diss.* p. 340.

All this amounts to no more, than that Edwards had more regard to revelation than to philosophy. The "height and front of his offending had this extent — no more." The "holy affections" in which he placed true religion, were affections which he considered as regarding God according to the view of his character exhibited in "the word of the truth of the gospel." He would not, to please philosophy, divest the principles of religion of their evangelical peculiarities, or extend his charity beyond the limits of *the Bible.* To hear it lamented that the principle adopted by Edwards as to the "love of divine things" should not have been so general and comprehensive as to have fitted him for religious association with "Plato and Shaftesbury and Malebranche," may well provoke a smile; and one can only regret, that the views of Christianity entertained by the able and justly bewailed philosopher and statesman who thus laments had not been themselves more definite, and more in accordance with the illiberal sentiments which he deplores. Our veneration for the dead must never tempt us to such a tolerance of their published sentiments as might be injurious to the living. And I hardly know any one thing more pernicious in its tendency and actual operation, than that generalizing of the term Christianity to a comprehensiveness which excludes almost nothing that a man may take a fancy to call by the name, — associated with the kindred sentiment of the *harmlessness of all opinions.* To this latter sentiment, — a sentiment as perilous as it is palatable, and as unscriptural and unphilosophical too as it is both, — we are sorry to find Sir James Mackintosh, distinctly and repeatedly, giving his most unqualified sanction. "The Scotists," says he, "steadily affirmed *the blamelessness of erroneous opinion; a principle which is the only effectual security for conscientious inquiry, mutual kindness, and for public quiet.*"

Now, that men have no right to interfere with each others' opinions; — that every attempt to compel the adoption of them by the force of persecution is as impious and unjust as it is insane and fruitless; and that all human punishment for them is a presumptuous usurpation of the province of Deity, — I freely admit, and would pertinaciously maintain. So far as the folly and the wickedness of persecution are concerned, I subscribe, with my whole soul, to the following powerful statement; — "No one but the religious

persecutor, a mischievous and overgrown child, wreaks his vengeance on involuntary, inevitable, compulsory acts or states of the understanding, which are no more affected by blame than the stone which the foolish child beats for hurting him. Reasonable men apply to everything which they wish to move the agent which is capable of moving it; force to outward substances, arguments to the understanding, and blame, together with all other motives, whether moral or personal, to the will alone. It is as absurd to entertain an abhorrence of intellectual inferiority or error, however extensive or mischievous, as it would be to cherish a warm indignation against earthquakes or hurricanes. It is singular that a philosopher who needed the most liberal toleration" (he is speaking of Mr. Hume) "should, by representing states of the understanding as moral or immoral have offered the most philosophical apology for persecution."—*Prelim. Diss.* p. 357. But, disowning as I do every approach to persecution, as incapable of any apology, whether on the principles of philosophy, of religion, or of common sense; I must at the same time hold it to be equally inconsistent with philosophy, with religion, and with common sense to deny that the *disposition* or *moral state of the heart*, has an influence on the exercise of the intellect, and the decisions of the judgment; this being a matter of fact which the experience of every day notoriously exemplifies: and surely, in as far as this is the case, sentiments may be blameworthy, and "states of the understanding moral or immoral." To entertain "no abhorrence of error, however extensive or mischievous," is either to proceed on the assumption that error never arises from moral causes; or to be insensible to the evil of those moral causes from which it does arise. Every declaration of Scripture that "he who believeth not shall be condemned, proceeds on the opposite hypothesis to that of the blamelessness of error, namely, that the rejection of the gospel is the result of moral causes; that "light is come into the world, and that men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."

We are prone to extremes. There is a narrow-minded imbecility, which magnifies the minutest points of doctrine to undue dimensions, elevates them into terms of communion, and separates itself, with a self-complacent jealousy, from the contact and consummation of the most circumstantial error, even notwithstanding a very complete agreement in the essential articles of revealed truth:—and there is, on the other hand, a liberalism in religion, which merges all

the peculiarities of Christian truth and Christian communion — breaking down and sweeping away the sacred inclosures of God's vineyard, — and, with a sentimental latitude of charity, which is exceedingly captivating, because it passes for philosophical strength of mind and largeness of heart, sets no limit to its all-comprehensive fellowship but that of a universally imputed sincerity. Such is the expansive liberality, which, with an unsuppressed feeling of approbation and delight, the censor of the narrow mindedness of Jonathan Edwards ascribes to Bishop Berkeley, when he says of him — "His mind, enlarging as it rose, at length receives every theist, however imperfect his belief, to a communion in its philosophic piety." — *Introd. Diss.* p. 351. There is assuredly a scriptural medium between these two extremes; and the Christian, who knows the terms in which inspiration speaks of "the wisdom of this world," while he enlarges his heart to "all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," will, at the same time, be not a little jealous of this undiscriminating "philosophic piety."